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THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

BY

ALFRED LOISY

PROFESSOR OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR GALTON

T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20
1910

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TRANSLATOR'S PROLOGUE

AN attempt has been made in the following pages to transfer the thought of M. Loisy's *La Religion d'Israël* into English; so that its fine scholarship may be available to readers who are not on easy terms with the original. French prose is the most perfect instrument of thought and speech that the modern world has given us. Indeed, it might be argued that it is more perfect, in some of its qualities, than even Greek and Roman. Though it may not have all the force, weight, and brevity of the latter, nor the opulent variety and the subtil distinctions of the former, yet in lucidity, precision, irony, and above all in lightness of touch, it yields to neither. In these respects, it is far superior to all other existing European languages, and even to those curious variations in one of them which are being manufactured so capriciously in Australasia, South Africa, and North America.

In that great age "when letters were polite," French was the language of ambassadors and

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the medium of international courtesy; and it is still the language in which urbanity prevails, not merely as a tradition, but as a living practice. Therefore it is most desirable that theological discussions should be carried on, whenever it is possible, in French; so that the language itself may help to assuage the proverbial heat of religious controversy. Most Englishmen are said to "write in a rage." Our divines and politicians are, indeed, often angry enough; but they are generally even more culpable through being dull and heavy-handed. To these faults the Germans usually add an obscurity, an obtuse rudeness, and a laughable want of tact, which are all their own. Against these defects, the urbanity, the clearness, the practical common-sense, and the lightness of French are the best preventives; and all these good qualities are met with invariably throughout M. Loisy's writings.

As a prose writer, so far as an Englishman is able to judge, M. Loisy carries on that high tradition which through Montaigne, Pascal, Fénelon, Voltaire, Talleyrand, Mérimée, Renan has come down, unbroken and unharmed, into our own time, and is being worthily continued by many learned and charming authors. It is not only impossible to estimate the living, but it is invidious to enumerate and class them; still

it would be allowed, perhaps on all hands, that M. Anatole France personifies best in himself, and exhibits most happily in his art, those finer qualities of French prose to which we have alluded, as they are illustrated by the great masters whom we have named. As an example of the more solid and monumental virtues of French writing, we should point to Monseigneur Duchesne, now deservedly a member of the Académie Française in succession to the witty Cardinal Mathieu. M. Duchesne's great book has been described felicitously as "Une histoire ancienne de l'Eglise racontée avec toute la science du vingtième siècle dans la langue du dix-huitième et à la barbe des théologiens du seizième." This epigram, which might also be applied to M. Loisy, we owe to the Abbé Houtin, himself the master of a biting and witty prose, in which he has exposed many antique frauds and immortalized innumerable dunces. It will be seen from these examples that the Church, at any rate in France, has been able so far to maintain her long connexion with humane letters, in which she can boast of so many illustrious names. Whether that tradition will survive the dissolution of the Concordat is perhaps as dubious as the connexion of some of these writers with the Church. However this may be, M. Duchesne has not succeeded to

Cardinal Mathieu's vacant Hat, nor is he likely to under the present Pontificate, which is mortally afraid of wit and scholarship, especially in historians.

It may be questioned, also, whether any of our own existing divines and historians are capable of writing, like Monseigneur Duchesne, "dans la langue du dix-huitième siècle," or whether they would understand precisely what is meant. If the great age of prose, or perhaps rather if its traditions, be still surviving and even flourishing in France it is because, for one reason, as Renan says so finely, "la langue française est puritaine": it is exclusive, reverent, scrupulous; and its best writers still exercise themselves deliberately in those great traditions which, as Pope warns us, and as our current literature shows, can not ever be neglected with impunity. Through these methods France can still produce authors who, without pedantry, artificiality, or stiffness, are able to give us so much of the form and spirit which are inherited from the delightful and cultured age of Louis XV. In English, the accomplished negligence of Goldsmith comes nearest to that fascinating and artless manner; and Goldsmith himself would have been the ideal translator of M. Loisy.

For all these reasons, it has been a work of

unusual difficulty to turn M. Loisy into English. All translation is at best elusive and disappointing. It resolves itself ultimately into an adoption of what seems least unsatisfactory, and Proteus himself is not more volatile than language. To transfer thought from one language into another is the best way to realize Homer's deeper meaning when he says that words are winged. The present translator knows as well as most of his readers and possible critics that any given sentence may be turned in at least half a dozen ways; and if he has had to choose one of them finally, it has never been without recognising that there are several others equally accurate and sound. But, since this translation has had the benefit of M. Loisy's friendly and very careful supervision, it may be claimed that he, at any rate, finds no positive error of detail in the attempt to convey his meaning; and he has been good enough to add that, as a composition, it seems to him readable, flowing, and successful. If that be the general verdict, the translator may be fairly satisfied. He has aimed, so far as possible, at keeping to the form of M. Loisy's sentences, and to the order of his words; but French has more inflections than English, and they enable it to be grammatical and clear in many cases where our uninflected language would be confused. In

some few passages, therefore, it has been thought advisable to break up and shorten M. Loisy's sentences, or to transpose the order of his clauses, though never it is hoped with any alteration of the meaning.

It may be remembered that Gibbon wrote much and easily in French. Indeed, he wavered long between composing his "Decline and Fall" in that language or in English. Those who have studied Gibbon's method will have seen how forcibly and concisely he makes a story tell itself by his moving and spirited use of verbs, and how his careful choice of epithets has often saved him a long paragraph of description in our more slovenly and effusive modern style. By these means he was able to convey, with singular minuteness, the history of the whole civilized world for nearly fifteen centuries, in rather less space than is occupied by Froude or Gardiner for about sixty years of British history alone. By similar means, M. Loisy is able to tell his long story in a more condensed way than most English writers could have used. Because he is short, it must not be inferred that he is slight or superficial, for the precise contrary is true; and the translation, probably, is very near to the original in length.

M. Loisy has christened his book *The Religion of Israel.* So refined and scrupulous a scholar

does not use words carelessly; and his volume neither is, nor professes to be, an History of the Jews, in the ordinary meaning of that term. There are many such histories, more or less apocryphal, and there is no need for another of the same kind in English. M. Loisy has given us something much better. He explains how the religion of Israel has grown up; analysing it, so far as that is possible, into its earliest and simplest elements; marking its probable origins, and setting it in that larger scheme of comparative religion, which is one of the most important and fruitful branches of our modern historical science. He thus traces Judaism to its beginnings, follows out its growth, and shows its extraordinary developments. Logical and entirely natural as the whole process has been, as one looks back, using the proper clue, it must be admitted that the religion of Israel contains a great deal which would be inexplicable and surprising to its primitive initiators, and much also that is hardly understood as yet by its existing adherents, whether Mosaists or Christians.

The chief clue which M. Loisy possesses is his oriental scholarship, which enables him to judge the Hebrew records with first-hand authority, and with unrivalled knowledge. He gives to his readers, in the clearest form and in a

wonderfully short space, the latest and soundest results of the higher criticism with regard to the age, authorship and composition of the canonical and the deutero-canonical books. These pages alone would make his volume of the utmost interest and value to many English readers. To some, perhaps, who are not versed in scriptural studies, M. Loisy may appear arbitrary or revolutionary; but any one who is familiar with the vast literature of the Biblical problem will be impressed more by his sobriety and caution. In addition to his profound scholarship and his practical common-sense, M. Loisy has a way of looking all round a question, and seeing it in every point of view, before he pronounces judgment. This makes him a safe teacher and a very awkward antagonist. Even Professor Harnack, in spite of all his learning, was shown that he had missed the essential point of Christ's teaching when the arguments of *L'Évangile et L'Église* were applied to "What is Christianity?"

The question of what Christianity really is has come to be asked in our days with more and more persistence; and the answer is being given with an always fuller knowledge, and a more rigorous application of scientific methods. M. Loisy has done more than almost any other single writer to give an answer which may

satisfy the intelligence and scholarship of this twentieth century. In his two great works, *Le Quatrième Évangile* and *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, he has explored the mysteries which have enveloped the composition and spirit of the Gospels. In his *Religion d'Israël*, he has examined and explained the foundation upon which the whole Christian super-structure has been raised. Whether it be acceptable or not, the foundations of both Judaism and Christianity have been altered by modern investigators. The old notions about the origin, authorship, date, order, and contents of the Hebrew records can not be maintained by any competent scholar. The general results of criticism must be, and are, accepted, whatever controversies and unsolved problems may remain about secondary details; and archæology bears out the general results of grammatical and historical criticism. The old view, besides being irreconcilable with our present knowledge of the universe and of its laws, presented a general scheme of Jewish history which swarmed with contradictions, improbabilities, difficulties, absurdities, even impossibilities. As we have now come to read the books, the whole history is made intelligible and coherent; and the religion, which is presented through the history, becomes more interesting than ever as a factor in the education of

mankind, and as an illustration of the process.

M. Loisy ends his story, significantly, with a chapter on messianism, into which the Jewish history belonging to the old world disappeared, and out of which the Christianity of the new world has emerged. The problem which, above all others, engages New Testament scholars at present is the true relation of Christ to the messianic kingdom, and his attitude towards the person and prospects of the messiah. With this problem is bound up the secret of his mind, and the whole question of Christian ethics. It used to be thought, especially by Anglican theologians, that in matters of criticism the New Testament could be separated from the Old, and that scholarship could be pulled up short at the end of Malachi. We have come to see, however, that the whole of Judaism is one long, gradual, and natural evolution, from the tribal God of nomad Semites in the desert to the universal God of the later prophets, who was modified again by Platonic and Alexandrian metaphysics. Whatever else Christianity may be, it is an Hellenistic structure built on a Jewish foundation, which was itself considerably Hellenised long before the Christian missionaries appeared. Criticism, then, has not stopped, and cannot stop, at

Judaism and the Old Testament; but it is far more constructive than destructive, and one of its positive results may be to reconcile Judaism to Christianity, when each of them is understood better. And a farther result may even be to reconcile the warring Christian sects, when scholarship dissolves, as it will inevitably, the ecclesiastical and theological barriers between them. Though M. Loisy ends this volume with messianism, as it was taken over and adapted by the earliest Christian preachers, he has in the *prolegomena* to his Synoptic Gospels sketched a most illuminative and fascinating "Life of Christ." This is now being disengaged from its rather formidable setting, and with some necessary alterations will form a separate work, which may probably be published soon. And all readers of this *Religion of Israel* will desire, it may be hoped, to have it presented to them in due time in English.

With regard to a few details in the present translation, it should be pointed out that all the renderings of Scripture are from one or other of our current English versions, the Authorized or the Revised, except in some few cases where M. Loisy's translation has differed from them substantially, and so is presumably nearer to the original. In the usage of proper names, our current English spelling has been followed in-

variably. Noah, for instance, has become an English word; Noe has not, and probably never will, nor has Moyses or Cham; and so of many other names with which the Authorized Bible has familiarized our Protestant Church and Nation, until they have become household words. In many ways it is a pity that these familiar names are not employed uniformly throughout the whole Bible, instead of the Greek forms under which some of them are disguised in the New Testament. In Egyptian and in all other non-scriptural names, M. Loisy's gallicised form of spelling has been retained. All educated persons unite in rejecting the incorrect Jehovah, so dear to lurid theologians; but, for very obvious reasons, the form Yahweh has been substituted for M. Loisy's *Jahvé*, though the word Jahvism remains unaltered. The Bible and the Prayer Book have also been followed in their consistent rejection of capital letters for pronouns and adjectives which refer to the Divinity. It is significant that their sober usage is ignored so flagrantly in modern practice, especially in clerical publications. An English Bible is very much to be desired in which the names Yahweh and Elohim are restored frankly to all the passages where they once existed in the original. This would add enormously to an honest and historical

understanding of the text; and these benefits would be more than doubled if the composite nature, the various authorship, and the probable date of the several writings could be indicated by some clear and simple method of typography.

When all is said and done, it still remains true that man cannot live by bread alone. The letter cannot satisfy him, and he requires the spirit. He must have an ideal; but the ideal is not lowered, it is heightened, by a proper understanding of the religion and history of Israel; for no other people has lived so completely in and by its ideals, or has evolved so splendid and stirring a romance out of its history. The flame of its poets and prophets almost blinds us to their intellectual poverty.

The ideal, in any case, is not to be found in a discredited and incredible theology, supported by the brute force of an oppressive and obscurantist clergy. M. Loisy has borne a foremost and distinguished part in that great struggle which at present is dissolving, and in the future may shatter, the largest of the Christian organizations. Fortune has been kind by liberating him, in spite of himself, from clerical fetters upon his thoughts and words; and still more by enabling him to speak freely, not only with all his own authority as one of the

best living orientalists, but with all the distinction and weight conferred by the Professorial Chair of the History of Religions in the *Collège de France.*

PREFACE

THE modest work of which a second edition is now offered to the public was written for the *Revue du Clergé français*. One part only, which made a first article, was able to appear in that periodical, in October, 1900; two other articles would have followed it. The whole, with a preface in which an endeavour was made to harmonise the conclusions of criticism with the principles of Catholic theology, was issued as a pamphlet in the early months of 1901. The edition of three hundred copies, which was sold out immediately, was not for public circulation.

A new edition seemed to be called for, because our literature is not well supplied with specialist works on this subject; and the most undeniable results of criticism are scarcely popularised in our country. But, on one hand, it was thought well to abridge certain arguments of an apologetic nature, which were appropriate in a work meant to acquaint the Catholic clergy with the assured

or the probable conclusions of Biblical criticism and at the same time to reconcile them with the official teaching of Catholicism. *La Religion d'Israël* was the continuation of some articles about religion and revelation which were published in the same review; and it would have served as the introduction to some others, on the origins and development of Christianity, which had appeared, in a different form, in the works entitled *L'Évangile et L'Église* and *Autour d'un Petit Livre*. The anxiety of adapting Catholicism to the modern spirit being henceforth indifferent to the author, he now abstains naturally from arguments which were meant to interpret the teachings of the Church according to the demands of modern thought.

On the other hand, it was thought indispensable to give more space to the historical exposition. The religion of Israel is the source from which the Christian religion has flowed. The two are only one religion among the others which have divided, and still divide, mankind. It is no longer the business of the historian to prove that this religion is true, and all the others false; but his function is, so far as possible, to determine its place in history, and its relation to worships which have preceded it, or with which it has been

in contact during the centuries of its existence. On these conditions only can a study of the Jewish and Christian past be described as scientific. But when the absolute and abstract point of view of the traditional theology is given up, other questions keep multiplying; and it may be said that every advance in the knowledge of religious antiquity raises new ones.

First comes the criticism of the sources. With the old theory of an inspired book, the historian's task was exceedingly simple: or rather, no history was possible. The sacred books of the Jews, dictated by God from cover to cover, became the Old Testament of the Christian Church, and could not but be free from all error and filled with all truth. For long, their evidence was accepted without examination; men were blind to their contradictions, their improbabilities, to the mythical or legendary character of innumerable stories. Five or six thousand years ago, God had created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh; having made the first man and woman with his own hands, he was displeased with their posterity, and had drowned the whole of it in a universal flood, saving only the family of Noah, with specimens of every kind of animal, in a large ark. After having led Abraham from the middle

of Chaldæa into Canaan, and eaten with him under the oak of Mamre, he was interested in his descendants: he rescued the Hebrews from Egypt, and made them cross the Red Sea dry-shod, and fed them in the wilderness during forty years with a manna which tumbled from the sky every morning; he was even able, afterwards, to make Balaam's donkey speak, to stop the sun at the command of Joshua, to keep Jonah alive three days and nights in the stomach of a great fish, where the prophet composed a hymn in his praise; he preserved the three young men in the fiery furnace which had been lit by Nebuchadnezzar; he carried Habakkuk by the hair of his head from Judæa to Babylon, with food ready cooked for Daniel in his lions' den. . . .

We have been driven to see that the Bible is not a book which was composed in a superhuman way, but a collection, of very unequal values, though always dominated by the same religious spirit, in which, for the advantage of a creed, historical facts, legendary traditions, absolute myths, have all been utilised; and they can be distinguished from one another, as in the case of any other ancient book, by the methods which are usually applied to the criticism of texts. The greater part of the books of the Old Testament cannot

be accepted as homogeneous writings; nor, on the whole, as contemporary evidence for the facts which they narrate. Tradition has been much too facile in settling the authorship of books: giving the Pentateuch to Moses, because the Law, which was said to have been promulgated by the old prophet in the name of God, was contained in it; the Book of Joshua to the hero whose actions it describes; Judges to Samuel, because he was the last personage who bore that title.

It has been established without difficulty that the so-called historical books were originally anonymous compilations, based on older sources, of exceedingly various origin and worth, which have been very freely combined and arranged by the Israelitish *hagiographers:* that a third only of the Book of Isaiah was written by that prophet; that Daniel is an apocryphal writing, composed during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes; that the so-called Psalms of David were most of them, if not all, written after the captivity in Babylon; that the writings issued under the patronage of Solomon are of the same epoch as the Psalms; and so of all the rest.

This upheaval of the received notions about the origin of the books as a natural consequence revolutionised our way of understand-

ing the history and religion of Israel. Instead of beginning with clear and definite information about the earliest ages of mankind and the birth of the Hebrew people, the sacred history gives us consistent facts only after the establishment of monarchy in Israel. Moses, Deborah, Gideon, even Samuel, can hardly be disengaged from legend. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his families, and still more Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his children, the Creation and the Flood, the Tower of Babel, all slip back into mythology. The Law, proclaimed by God from Sinai or in the plains of Moab, was all elaborated in the last years of the monarchy, or after the captivity: the Mosaic revelation was nothing more than a theological romance. Instead of the prophets having come after the Law, it was they who inspired it.

The religion of Israel survived nevertheless as a great and an astonishing fact, both in itself, and through its ulterior manifestation as Christianity. But, far from being the first religion in its antiquity, it only appeared many thousands of years later than the venerable beliefs of Egypt and Chaldæa. It was no longer the perfect type, of which all other religions were only caricatures made by human ignorance and passion, if not rather by the promptings of the devil. On the con-

trary, it depended itself upon a past which was mythological and pagan; and it issued from it by a gradual evolution, without ever (and how could it?) becoming wholly detached. And as it was drawn closer to the other religions, as it was seen to be one of them, and to have no right to a place apart from or above all the others, its story was bound sooner or later to be fitted into the general fabric of the history of religions, making only one chapter in it, and that neither the least curious nor the least important.

It is thus that a divine epic, which had no mysteries so long as faith was prostrated before its wonders, has become a portion of human history, inevitably complex, obscure in many of its parts, and swarming with infinite problems. Because now, since this religion did not fall from heaven ready-made, and was not maintained by repeated miracles, it is necessary to know whence came the details of its worship and beliefs, and in what circumstances it transformed itself during the progress of the centuries.

Our ultimate knowledge about the history of religions, especially in what relates to the oldest Oriental worships, will no doubt throw light upon many of the questions which still puzzle us in the religion of Israel. For the

present, many of these questions, and above all some of those which are connected with the origins, remain undecided. What is certain is, that the religion of Israel was produced in a relatively modern epoch, and in a peculiar environment; that its evolution depended on the actual history of the people among whom it originated or developed; that the miraculous in its legends, like that in all other religions, was a product of the believing imagination; that what characterises it in comparison with others is not a series of more or less extraordinary prodigies, like the changing of the Nile waters into blood, or the mysterious hand which wrote the fate of Babylon on the wall during Belshazzar's feast, but the force of the moral instinct which drew up out of the worship of Yahweh, the special God of Israel, a conception of a universal God, and an ideal of perfect justice: which made religion a duty, and duty a religion; which operated or prepared the metamorphosis of a national and exclusive religion into a religion both universal and ardently proselytising.

We are compelled, then, in this new edition, to present the religion of Israel as it appears now to the historian, both in itself and in its own development, as well as in its rela-

tion to the other religions of antiquity, and to the general history of religion. The reader must please admit that a summary exposition, such as this is, will not allow of arguments, nor of special proofs, nor even of references beyond those to the Biblical sources. We have tried to show as much as is possible the degree of certainty or of probability which pertains to our varying conclusions. Many of these can only be hypotheses. Those who are thereby astonished, and who find that a solid tradition is thrown over for mere guesses, will show only that they do not yet understand the real nature of the tradition which they extol, and of the evidence which the historian must interpret. A plausible conjecture is always worth more than a false assertion, even when it is traditional. And what is really important in such matters is the general truth of the landscape, notwithstanding some inevitable haziness in the details.

It is natural that an attempt of this nature should appear extremely rash to people who accept all the narratives of Scripture as literal history, and who take refuge, for matters which concern the origins of religion, in the point of view set forth by Bossuet in his *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle.* Faith is never disproved; and we have no intention of refuting either Bossuet or his modern followers.

But, looking only at the probability of opinions, one may hold such a refutation to be superfluous; because it has been done long ago, and it would be useless to do it over again.

Others, perhaps, will pronounce us sufficiently retrograde, or at least too cautious, since we do not overflow with *pan-babylonism*, as it has been made fashionable by learned Assyriologists, or even with such and such a system of religious philosophy, quite novel doubtless, and full of promise.

The life of the Israelite religion did not consist in a series of annexations from neighbouring worships; and, though foreign influences cannot be denied, the fundamental character of Jahvism must be sought elsewhere than in its assimilative powers. The question of borrowing, then, is secondary: it cannot, either, be decided without direct evidence, certain connections, and detailed analogies; certainly not by coincidences which may be fortuitous, or by superficial resemblances. An Assyriologist of great eminence has been able to maintain that the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh inspired all the Biblical story, including the Gospels, and even the Greek mythologies: proofs have been brought forward; but the system is not proved, and everything looks as though we should have to wait for that. Another Assyriologist, who is not less

considerable, wishes to explain the patriarchal and Mosaic legends, even the histories of the Judges and of David, and all mythologies, by the astrological myths of Babylon. Chaldæa seems to have been, in fact, the land of astrology, and also of astronomy; but the descent of the Biblical traditions from the Babylonian myths has not been established clearly, except for the greater part of those which are outlined in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Let us, then, wait for the years to prove the system of M. H. Winckler. Historical truth does not as a rule dwell in such vague and arbitrary conclusions.

We should also be sober in our conjectures about the worship of the Hebrews in prehistoric times, about the primitive religion of the Semites, even about the origins of religion in mankind. Some distinguished scholars have presented the religion of certain uncivilised American and Australian tribes as being necessarily the first stage in every religion, so that totemism* would be at the base of Israel's religion, as of all others. It may well be that the base of all religions is something just as

* The religion of a tribe bearing the name of, and placed in a strict relationship with, some species of plant, or often of animal, held to be endowed with divine powers, and whose ancestors were supposed to be also the ancestors of the tribe.

lowly as totemism; and that everywhere a preoccupation with natural forces, or the worship of spirits, of animals, of springs and stones, has preceded the worship of gods, and above all of God. It seems not less certain that religion is a primordial factor in human society, and that it was really the sacred bond of the first groups, families, and tribes, in which humanity began to be conscious of itself. And the laws of these societies were rules, according to our view more or less arbitrary and superstitious, which resembled closely the *tabus* of savages; commands which were at once religious, moral, and social in their rude and ignorant simplicity. But it will no doubt be advisable, until evidence, and above all ancient evidence, which is continually becoming more full and better studied, shall have enlightened the subject, not to imagine too great a uniformity in the religious evolution of the primitive peoples. It is true that analogous conditions of living produce analogous institutions. However, analogy is not identity. Has not the human spirit infinite resources for varying the *idola* of its thought and imagination, or even the principles of its conduct and the forms of its social relationships? Let us, then, study the history of religions according to historical methods and by historical evidence: being sure that, if

all the other sciences are able, on occasion and in a certain way, to serve historical criticism, as it can also in the same sense be of help to them, no other science can supply the want of that which is the very substance of history, namely, evidence and proved facts.

An exhaustive bibliography of the subject here treated would fill volumes. It must be enough to point out those recent works which can be studied with most advantage, and which have been used most for the present publication.* We make no claim to supersede them. Nor do we think we have either followed them blindly or differed from them without good reason. The finest independence in such matters is, perhaps, to eschew any system, and to keep as nearly as possible to the sources; so that the mutual balance between the old documents and their new interpretation may be adjusted, as though automatically, before the eyes of the reader.

* Lagrange, *Etudes sur les religions sémitiques* (second edition, 1905). Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte* (second edition, 1899). Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, i. (1905). E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstœmme* (1906). Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (1903). Schuerer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, third edition (1898–1901). Volz, *Jüdische Eschatologie von Daniel bis Akiba* (1903).

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THE SOURCES

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES

THE principal, and one might almost say the only, source for a history of the religion of Israel, before the Greek domination, is that collection of books which Christian tradition has defined as the Old Testament; and those books are preserved, for the most part in their original language, in the Hebrew Bible. It is of these documents especially, which are held sacred by Jews and Christians, that we have now to estimate the contents and value. The other writings, numerous as they are, which deal with the history of Judaism under Greek and Roman domination, until the final overthrow of the Jewish nationality, either bear only upon the external history of religion, or do not present the same difficulties of analysis and interpretation as do the biblical records. Moreover, they are submitted by everybody, without hesitation, to the ordinary laws of

criticism. Besides, if the religion of Israel still presents, during this period, many problems of which the solution is dubious, nevertheless its general position is sufficiently clear, and is known with certainty. Outlines and summaries, then, may suffice for the non-biblical sources; and we shall devote ourselves, rather, to a criticism and examination of the biblical authorities.

§ 1

The collection or canon of the Old Testament was not settled definitely until near the beginning of the Christian era. The compilation of the five books of Moses, so-called, or the Pentateuch, was made about the year 400 B.C. This is the Law, which is the earliest and the fundamental part of the Hebrew Bible. The second part embraces the series of writers who are known as the ancient prophets: the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings; and the farther series known as the later prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. In spite of his subject and purpose, Daniel did not get into this second series, which probably closed before he was made public; but he found his way into the third part of the collection, which was called the Sacred Writings, or the *Hagiographa*. This third part includes the Psalms, Proverbs, Job,

the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Chronicles (the *Paralipomena* of the Greek and Latin Bibles). The ecclesiastical Bible contains, besides certain writings which circulated chiefly among the Hellenistic Jews, and which were not promoted into the official canon of the Synagogue, Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah, the additions to the books of Daniel and Esther, Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, so-called, Tobit, Judith, and the two books known as the Maccabees. The series of the earlier prophets was a continuation of the Law, and must have acquired its definite form about the same time. The collection of the prophets, in the stricter sense, must have been settled a little later, towards the end of the third century before our era. The collection of *Hagiographa* seems to have been established in fact, if not officially recognised, about the end of the second century before Christ.

As was natural, the canonisation of all these books led to a relative fixing of their text, which was soon honoured with a meticulous respect. Nevertheless, a comparison with the old Greek version, known as the Septuagint, shows that, during the two or three centuries immediately before the Christian era, the Hebrew copies contained numerous variations;

and that in certain books, in Jeremiah for instance, there were recensions or versions which differed considerably from one another. These differences, slight as they may be, were the continuation, in some sense, of that long work of editing and compiling, out of which process the chief books in the sacred collection have issued in their present form.

Certain popular songs, such as the pæan of Deborah or David's elegy on the death of Saul and Jonathan, may be considered the most ancient documents in the Hebrew literature. From the times of David and Solomon the kings had official archives, and historical records soon came into existence. But from these sources, which were more or less secular, the pious writers who culled from them have utilised only those outlines and quotations which they could adapt to their purposes of edification. The first experiment in a religious literature may be placed, it would seem, in the ninth century, to which date we may assign the oldest fragments which have entered into the composition of the Hexateuch (that is, the Pentateuch and Joshua), viz., the Jahvistic and Elohistic histories.

This designation of the historical sources is borrowed from the divine names which are used in them respectively. The Jahvistic history

begins with the creation of the world, and thenceforward employs the name Yahweh as the proper designation of God, implying that this name was known to mankind from the beginning. The Elohistic history only begins with Abraham, the supposed ancestor of the Hebrew people, and it assumes that the name Yahweh, the exclusive title of the God of Israel, was revealed only to Moses, the organiser of the Israelitish nation and the founder of its religion. These two histories were collections of legends about the origins of the Hebrew people and of their religious practices. They have as their joint foundation the cycles of patriarchal and Mosaic traditions. Though they seem to differ in appearance, the purpose of these two cycles is in reality the same; they both aim at explaining and legalising the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. The patriarchal legends present Israel through its mythical ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, without laying much stress upon the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt; while the Mosaic legends, on the other hand, are written with a view to the conquest of Palestine, since they make the exodus from Egypt their basis. The story of Joseph reconciles these two legendary cycles, without, however, concealing their parallelism.

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The Jahvistic history contains an earlier cycle of legends about the origins of mankind; a veritable mythology, of which the foreign source cannot be doubted, although the tradition of Israel has chastened the polytheism, and to a large extent has recomposed the material according to its own spirit. The story of the flood was taken certainly from Chaldæa, and a narrative more ancient than that in the Hebrew story has been found among the cuneiform inscriptions. The affinity is much less close between the Jahvistic histories of the creation and of the first sin and various Babylonian fables. Since Palestine had felt Babylonian influences from the earliest times, we cannot assign a precise date to these borrowings, which we need not suppose to have been made either directly from or contemporaneously with the documents which have led to a belief in them.

It has been possible to discriminate between the Jahvistic and Elohistic sources, as well as to discern the other elements which have been combined into the Pentateuch, and to reconstruct them, more or less, because the work of compilation was effected by quite elementary processes, which left unaltered the particular style of each contribution. Pains were not always taken to avoid duplications whenever

the texts gave parallel accounts, and the compilers were not embarrassed even by contradictions when they were not too glaring. Nevertheless, the dexterity of the joinings, deliberate omissions, glosses, and editorial manipulations have all made the connexion and position of many details extremely dubious.

The sources, moreover, are not individual compositions, but collections which had already been tampered with before they were submitted to a common editorship. So that behind the Jahvistic and Elohistic documents we can guess at the work of an earlier writer, who made the original draft, combining his material with more or less freedom, arranging the old legendary traditions with more or less originality, fitting into his narrative old popular songs and even such other literary matter as he had at his disposal. But this first attempt would be added to and rehandled continually by other persons, who worked in the spirit of the original editor, and who belonged, if one may so express it, to his school. It is not probable that the Jahvistic and Elohistic histories were wholly independent of one another. Both have, in spite of certain special tendencies, the same religious character. In certain places the Elohistic history seems more archaic, though many believe in the priority of the Jahvistic history, and consider

the Elohistic to be in some way dependent on it. The Jahvistic history must have been written in Judah and the Elohistic in Israel. Both of them are connected with those collections of precepts which were the nucleus of the Law.

That version of the Law can be dated which was found in the temple at Jerusalem, in 621 B.C., under King Josiah; and it is preserved for us in Deuteronomy. Everything leads us to believe that it was composed for the purpose of that reformation which its discovery produced. But the primitive text, even of this document, has been added to like that of the others; and it was manipulated again before being mingled with the Jahvistic and Elohistic histories during the times of the captivity. It was in the spirit and temper of Deuteronomy that that re-editing of Judges, of Samuel, and of the Kings was carried out, in which ancient documents, heroic and prophetic legends, extracts from the chronicles and memoirs of the kings, were all squared with theological and pietistic interests.

The chief part of the Law, which deals mainly with ritual, and which fills a portion of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, and the larger part of Numbers, contains a compilation styled by critics the Law of Holiness.* This was

* Lev. xvii.–xxvi.

arranged at Babylon, during the captivity. Besides this, there is material similar, at any rate in plan, to the Jahvistic and Elohistic histories, and which is known as the Sacerdotal History. It begins with the creation of the world and continues till the division of Palestine among the tribes, under the leadership of Joshua. It does not linger among the antique legends, which are collected in the earlier sacred histories, farther than is necessary to connect the chief institutions and religious customs with decisive events in the past. Thus, the sabbath is connected with the creation of the world; the abstinence from blood, with the deluge; circumcision, with Abraham; the whole system of sacrifices and ritual, with the revelation at Sinai. Finally, additions were made, according to need and opportunity, to the legislative code which was formed by mingling the Sacerdotal Histories with the Law of Holiness. Many of these additions would seem to be later than the promulgation of the Sacerdotal Code, which was made by Ezra in 444 B.C. As the legal precepts of the Jahvistic record were supposed to have been dictated by Yahweh to Moses on Sinai, and those of the Elohistic records on Horeb, and Deuteronomy in the plains of Moab, so the ritual of the Sacerdotal Code had also

been taught by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is well known that the Code of Hammurabi, which has been discussed so frequently of late, was revealed in a similar way to the King of Babylon by the god Shamash.

The Scribes who flourished after Ezra detached that part of the Sacerdotal Code which was concerned with the division of the Promised Land, and then, by amalgamating the two compilations formed from joining the Jahvistic and Elohistic history on to Deuteronomy, and uniting the Sacerdotal History with the Levitical Legislation, they made up the Pentateuch.

The utterances of the prophets seem to have been collected at once by their disciples, and preserved. The most ancient collection is that of Amos (about 750), which has received only slight and unimportant additions. The collection of Hosea's utterances, which is a little later, has come to us under very similar conditions. The Book of Isaiah consists of two parts, which can be distinguished easily: i., chapters 1-39, and ii., chapters 40-66. Not a line of the second part can be attributed to the prophet who was a contemporary of Hezekiah. Two-thirds of this part were written shortly before Cyrus took Babylon, and the remaining third was composed in the times of the Persian domina-

tion. The first part of the book contains prophecies by the original Isaiah, amplified by details borrowed from the Book of Kings, and by prophetical fragments belonging to many epochs, even as late as the Greek domination. The Book cannot have acquired its existing form until near the end of the third century before our era.

The Book of Jeremiah includes a relatively large number of authentic utterances, dictated by the prophet to his disciple Baruch, and some biographical information, arranged probably by the same disciple; but the whole was finally re-cast, filled out with later pieces, and coloured. The Book of Ezekiel, perhaps, of all the prophetical collection, has the most regular construction, and has suffered least from re-editing in traditional interests. About a third of the Book of Micah, who lived at the same time as Isaiah, is authentic; the remainder was added later, and especially after the exile. Nahum wrote a little before the fall of Nineveh (608?); but his prophecy, which is very short, has been enlarged by a psalm placed at the beginning, and this is post-exilian. Zephaniah wrote under Josiah, but his prophecy appears to have been highly coloured. Habakkuk, the contemporary of Jeremiah, prophesied against the Chaldæans; but his

utterance has been lengthened by two psalms, one as a prologue and the other as a kind of epilogue. Obadiah and Joel both lived after the captivity. Haggai was contemporary with the rebuilding of the temple under Darius I. Zechariah belonged to the same period; but the second part of his titular book is not his, and seems to have been written under the Greek domination. The so-called Book of Malachi is anonymous, and was undoubtedly written shortly before the promulgation of the Sacerdotal Code by Ezra. The romance of Jonah must have been composed about the year 300, and the psalm which that prophet is imagined to have composed in the stomach of his fish was added later.

Thus, the handling of the prophets' books was very similar to that of the books which are called historical. They were all utilised for the edification of the Jewish community; and, for this purpose, they were pitched in the key, so to speak, of the religious evolution. The multiplication of anonymous prophecies, after the captivity, bears witness to the decay of the prophetical ministry; and the number of pseudonymous prophecies in the apocalyptic literature, which begins with Daniel, is a consequence of its total disappearance, though anonymous fragments were still added by

collectors of prophecies to writings which bore the name of some author. The fortune of these apocrypha depended on the credence which was given them.

After a certain period of hesitation, most critics have decided to bring down the composition of the Psalms, except perhaps of a very few, to a date after the exile, under the Persian domination, and even into the times of the Maccabees. The whole of the sapiential books appear to be later than the captivity. The Book of Job was written under the Persian domination, and it is not all from a single hand. The collection of Proverbs is apparently of the same age. Ecclesiastes is later, and must have been composed in the times of the Greek domination, probably towards the close of the third century. The Proverbs got into the canon as a production of Solomon, and so did Ecclesiastes, though it was not admitted without serious difficulty. Attributed also to Solomon, a collection of songs for wedding feasts was able to get into the Bible, and to hold its position there; the Song of Songs, as we have it now, is also of the third or second century B.C. It has no bearing on religious history, except through its allegorical interpretations; or, rather, through the complete inversion which has transformed it into a sacred

and pious writing. The Book of Ruth would seem to have been written for a controversial purpose by a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. Esther is certainly later than the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and the establishment of the Asmonæan dynasty. Towards the middle of the third century may be placed the composition of that historical summary, edited in the spirit and style of the Priestly Code, which contained originally the Chronicles as well as the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Lamentations attributed to Jeremiah are not by that prophet. They were written partly during the exile and partly after the return. The Book of Daniel was composed during the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, probably in the early part of the year 164. It was issued under the name of a legendary personage, who was made contemporary with the last Kings of Judah, with Nebuchadnezzar and the last King of Babylon, and with Cyrus.

The First Book of the Maccabees tells the history of the Jewish people from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes until the death of the High Priest Simon Maccabæus. It is the finest piece of historical writing that Jewish antiquity has bequeathed us ; but, at the same time, it is almost a secular production. The author wrote

near the opening of the first century before the present era. With the Second Book of the Maccabees, which deals only with the early period of the Maccabæan rising, we are taken back into the atmosphere of edifying literature. The editor lived before the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, and he professes to abridge an earlier writer, Jason of Cyrene, who must have composed his work in the latter half of the second century B.C. The Book of Tobit is a pious novel, founded on a popular story; it was composed probably in the second century before our era by some Jew of the dispersion. Judith is also a romance, but more national than pious; it is very similar in tendency to Esther, and is most probably of the same period. The Epistle attributed to Jeremiah is a production of Hellenistic Judaism, and it is not possible to date it even approximately. The whole of Baruch seems to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Book of Ecclesiasticus was put together about the year 200 B.C.; it would have been admitted into the Hebrew canon, with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, if the author, instead of advertising himself, had placed his work under the patronage of Solomon. The author of Wisdom took that course; but, as he wrote in Greek, he was only

able to get into the canon of the Christian Church.

In conclusion, it will be fitting to mention here the psalms attributed to Solomon, and which were written about the year 50 B.C., as well as the pseudonymous apocalypses, which followed the precedent of Daniel, those of them at least which preceded the arrival of Christianity. The Book of Enoch is a collection of writings which are later than Daniel; but most of them, if not all, are earlier than the Christian period. The Assumption of Moses was issued early in our era; and there are compositions of Jewish origin in the Sibylline Books. Many other apocryphal writings are lost. From the time of Antiochus Epiphanes more especially, Hellenistic Judaism was most prolific in pseudepigraphical writings, which were composed for purposes of controversy and edification. One may assert, without being paradoxical, that impersonality has been the leading characteristic of Israelitish literature from its beginning; but that anonymity prevailed in ancient times, while in Judaism, and since the Greek domination, pseudonymity grew to outrageous proportions. This habit is not without significance for the historian; neither has it failed to raise many problems for the critics.

§ 2

It was neither a simple nor an easy task to construct a consistent and fairly certain history from this chaos of traditions, which were manipulated and changed perpetually: from this mass of writings which were without author or dates, unless they were spurious and misdated.

It is not surprising that several scholars have thought it impossible to find a key to the religious history of Israel before the Babylonian captivity; and that, relying upon the tone and certain peculiarities of the final re-editing, they have maintained that all the books of the Hebrew canon were composed after the exile. This view would simplify the task of the historian enormously; but it would mean a considerable suppressing of criticism, and so of history. A closer study of the peculiar genius of this literature, more attention to the processes of editing and of construction, and to the various elements which are combined sometimes in the same book and even on the same page, enable us, it would seem, to acknowledge more genuine material, and to derive from it a richer store of information.

No text, really, can be worthless to an historian; because his first business is to settle its meaning, and then, if he can, to discover

its origin. For instance, a story about the creation of the world, which one may read in the Bible or elsewhere, may not be historical in itself; but it does express the beliefs and thoughts of given times and circumstances. The Book of Job is not a record of patriarchal history, but it does inform us about the problems which were being stirred in Jewish minds under the pressure of the Law. Stories like Esther and Judith, or Jonah and Tobit, if they be taken literally, give us only false notions about the relations of Israel with Nineveh and the Assyrian monarchy, or with the Kings of Persia and their court at Susa; but they are invaluable witnesses to the religious and moral atmosphere, or to family relations, or to the bitterness of national feeling, in the Jewish community at certain definite epochs. The history of primitive ages in the sacerdotal documents of the Hexateuch is a tissue of exaggerations and impossibilities; but how much does it not reveal to us about the mentality of the Jews as they returned from exile? And do not all the primitive legends enable us to realize in a living way the times which preceded the theological reformation and the predominance of the Law? Thus the chaos becomes a veritable mine for those who understand how to work it.

Assuredly, however, historical information is more easy to compile for the post-exilian times; although the pre-exilian are not wholly dark. No one disputes the general outlines of Israelite history after the establishment of the Kingdom: a short period of unity, under David and Solomon; a schism between Ephraim and Judah under Solomon's successor, and an ensuing period of hostility; Ephraim then threatened by Damascus, and soon after destroyed by Assyria; Judah overthrown a little later by Babylon; but its remnant forming itself again into a community with religious autonomy under the sovereignty of Persia, Greece, and Rome. Now this frame-work of political history may be reconstructed from our existing documents; and, in a similar way, our documents are fitted into this frame-work. So also is the evolution of the religious history, which was always in the closest relation with the political history.

The system of Deuteronomy which was so unreal in its presentation of the past, and the conceptions of the Priestly Code and of Chronicles which were even more artificial, were not able to eliminate every thing which stultified them in the genuine traditions of antiquity. Post-exilian Judaism only recognised one sanctuary where it was lawful to sacrifice to the God of Israel: this is a certain fact, guaranteed

by all the evidence which we have, both sacred and profane, for the last period of Jewish history, that is to say after the captivity. But tradition asserts that this fact, which was equally strange and undeniable, was of Mosaic institution; though this did not hinder the avowal that it was not the ancient practice. For it names the King who destroyed the sanctuaries outside Jerusalem, namely Josiah; and it goes on to describe the occasion: the priest Hilkiah finding in the Temple a book of the Law which prescribed this rule. Josiah had no knowledge that Yahweh had made this revelation to Moses, and all his predecessors had been as ignorant of their duty as himself. Tradition also affirms that they had not carried it out. Deuteronomy, too, does not require this unity of sacrificial service as a thing natural and needing no explanation; it describes it, rather, as a measure directed against the innumerable sanctuaries which existed throughout the country. From this clue, and from many others which are subsidiary to it, we can see that Deuteronomy, at any rate in its chief contents, was the very book of which the discovery caused the action of Josiah. Deuteronomy, moreover, in style and language has the closest similarity to Jeremiah, who was the leading prophet of that age.

A reformation postulates an existing state which it is desirable to change, because it is unsatisfactory. Before Josiah, every town or hamlet possessed its own place of worship, where it sacrificed to the national God. A collection of laws, which was shorter and more archaic in form than Deuteronomy, the Book of the Covenant, embedded in Exodus, authorizes sacrifice "in every place where Yahweh has caused his name to be remembered."* Besides this, Amos and Hosea, who preached in Ephraim, did not require that men should go to Jerusalem to sacrifice. They protested against sacrifices in general, because they saw that there was a better and more efficacious way of serving God. The legends of Samuel and Elijah exhibit those prophets themselves sacrificing away from the sanctuary of the ark, and in a manner not prescribed by the ritual attributed to Moses. It is not less significant that the Jahvistic and Elohistic histories take the patriarchs to the very sanctuaries which were condemned by Deuteronomy: to Bethel, to Shechem, to Hebron, to Beersheba, as though to dedicate them in perpetuity to the worship of Yahweh. To these patriarchal and prophetic legends might be added legends from the heroic days of the Judges, which bear witness to religious practices

* Exodus xx. 24.

very different from those which are authorized by the legislation of Deuteronomy and of the Priestly Code.

The various documents fall into groups, and throw light upon one another. Ezekiel is a prelude to the Sacerdotal Code which guided the reformation of Ezra and Nehemiah; and the Chronicles depend on it, as giving a misrepresentation of history in agreement with the sacred legislation. Jeremiah goes with Deuteronomy, which was ushered in by the ministry of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah; and which itself inspired the commentary on the traditions deposited in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Taken out of their setting, these traditions and the patriarchal legends give some notion of the religion of Israel before the literary prophets, and before any official promulgation of a law attributed to Moses.

These legends themselves justify certain deductions, more or less probable, concerning the origins of the Israelite people and religion. They were not imagined altogether by the contemporaries of the early Kings of Israel and Judah; but they represent national memories, more or less vitiated and transformed by the lapse of time. Although the patriarchal legends, for instance, teach us nothing about the personages who figure in them, for the good reason

that they never existed; yet they do inform us, not only about the genius of ancient Israel, but about its origins, about the events which moulded it into a people, and about its relations with its neighbours or with the populations which preceded it on the soil of Palestine. None of these things can be indifferent to the history of a religion which has been modified by these circumstances and connexions. If the deductions, which have been mentioned, cannot have either the precision or the certitude of direct and authentic evidence they do not cease to be legitimate, provided they are used with tact. Indeed, they constitute the history of times which are wanting in more exact information. Abraham and Sarah are mythical personages; but their legend proves the importance of the sanctuaries at Hebron, and the annexation of them to the God of Israel. For these holy places existed before the coming of the Hebrews, and they belonged to the Gods which were specially venerated by the populations of Canaan. It is hardly rash to guess that Abraham and Sarah were the ancient divinities of the district, who were harmonised in the legend so as to be subordinated to the God who supplanted them. We are told that Jacob, after wrestling with Yahweh through a whole night, was called Israel by the God

who failed to conquer him. This miraculous contest is no more historical than the battle of the Titans with Jupiter; but it enables us to see clearly that the tribes who were considered the posterity of Jacob only took the name of Israel at the period of the conquest. It also leads us to suspect that Jacob himself was a divine personage; and, as the memories of the patriarch are connected with the sanctuary of Bethel, his place of worship probably was there. Abraham never went into Egypt; but the fable which brought him there was made to support the Mosaic legends, as they required an old connexion of the Hebrews, while still nomads, with the land of the Pharaohs. The legend of Joseph has a similar meaning; and as it was pretended that the tomb of this patriarch was at Shechem, it came about that Shechem had a sacred cave like that of Machpelah at Hebron; and the hero said to be buried in it no doubt originated also in a God. The legend of Isaac, which gravitated round Beersheba, leads us to suppose that Isaac also had been the divinity of that shrine.

As the old population of Canaan was not exterminated, as it should have been, by the invading tribes, but was progressively conquered and assimilated by them, so the religious customs, the myths, the Gods, of the Canaanite

sanctuaries, entered little by little, and by transforming themselves, into the traditions of Israel. This double assimilation is revealed and witnessed to by the ancient narratives.

The original meaning of these ancient legends, so far as it can be restored conjecturally, would be no longer intelligible, even to the sharpest criticism, if a comparison with other religions of antiquity, and even with the non-semitic ones, did not help us to discover and interpret it. But analogous cases are not wanting to us. Jacob and his twelve sons, who are the twelve tribes of Israel, have just as much reality as the forefathers of the Greeks; as Hellen and his posterity, Doros and Æolos, Xuthos, Ion, and Achæus. The eccentric and ancient customs, circumcision, abstinence from blood, distinctions of clean and unclean, of purity and impurity, seem open to at least a satisfactory explanation when the same or analogous practices are met with among other primitive peoples. Not only the artless cosmogony of the Jahvistic historian, but the more advanced theory of the sacerdotal history, and the story of the flood as well, have their parallels and their originals, at least as to the frame-work of the narratives, in old eastern mythologies, and especially in the Chaldæan. And the *nabi* of Israel, the wild

and half-mad prophet, has his brethren in other religions. Moses himself, with his magician's rod, is like those divining priests who are found more or less anywhere. The strange oracle consulted by Saul and David, and which answered the questions put to it by throwing lots, has its resemblances elsewhere. If the religion of Israel reaches a great height in its prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries, in its psalmists, and in the author of Job, nevertheless its origin was very humble. The farther back one explores towards that origin, the more do possibilities of comparison abound; and they make up, in some degree, for the ominous gaps and obscurities in the evidence.

§ 3

Some questions, however, of extreme gravity remain, and always probably will remain, without any certain answer. Of this nature are questions about the sojourn of Israel in Egypt and the exodus, to point to the most glaring instance; since they bear upon the actual origin of the worship of Yahweh. The most ancient tradition was from the first over-burdened with contradictory legends. Neither the details of the sojourn in Egypt, nor of the coming of

Israel to Sinai, nor of the career of Moses, can be disentangled clearly.

The legend of Joseph personifies the arrival of Israel in Egypt; but it is impossible to think that Israel came into Egypt as a family, and went out as a nation. Jacob and his twelve sons represent Israel collectively: Israel must, therefore, have come in as a nation. Nevertheless the tradition enables us to see clearly that Israel only existed as a nation after it had taken Yahweh as its God; and that Yahweh only became the God of Israel after, or in consequence of, the exodus. Before that, Israel did not exist as an assemblage of tribes bound to one another by a common worship: it existed only as a number of kindred tribes wandering over the Arabian desert and through the peninsula of Sinai. Nothing hinders us from believing that some of these tribes established themselves for a certain time on the frontiers of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and that, not satisfied with the conditions there, they moved away again to rejoin their brethren in the desert. It is not, however, by any Egyptian influence upon the religion of Israel that one can prove this; because hardly a trace of any such influence can be made out: the tradition depends solely on the persistence with which the memory of some early con-

nexion with Egypt was maintained; a connexion witnessed to by the legends of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. Still these legends are but legends: the artificial and accumulated details which they may exhibit, which assuredly they do exhibit, prevent us from judging with any certainty about their real and historical significance.

In any case it seems plain that the memories of Egypt, "the house of bondage," and of the exodus, acquired through tradition an importance which was always growing, and which they did not have in the beginning. The conquest of Canaan was made from the east, by crossing the Jordan, for the occupation of the country held by those tribes to which the name of Israel more properly belonged; and from the south, by way of the desert, for the territory which afterwards became Judæa. The northern tribes, nevertheless, had the same God as Judah; and it was in the preceding conditions of a common life that Israel and Judah had accepted this worship. The conditions of their nomadic life had brought them into contact with Yahweh, who, we cannot doubt, was the divinity of Sinai. The connexion between the tribes and the God can be explained without reference to Egypt; but our concern is not with possibilities. The tribes

in their wandering life became acquainted with the God Yahweh. Since they all believed themselves related to this God, a sort of confederation was doubtless formed among them in the beginning under the name and patronage of the divinity. The occasion of this treaty may have been possibly an emigration of tribes leaving the north-eastern territory of Egypt to join their fortunes with the allied tribes who lived in the desert. It was in the name of Yahweh that the exodus was effected, and that the league of tribes was negotiated.

Certain assyriologists have argued that Egypt was not Egypt, but the Sinaitic peninsula, which bore in the cuneiform inscriptions the name of *Musri*, and was thus confused by Israelitic tradition with the name of Egypt, *Misraim*. Some have gone so far as to assert that David must have been originally the ruler of Caleb, in the district of Hebron; that he submitted, first Judah, and then the other tribes, to his authority; and that it was he who imposed on all Israel, the Israel which he had just consolidated, the religion of Yahweh, a divinity who was venerated on Mount Sinai, in the land of *Musri*, by the Arabian tribes. But this hypothesis hardly needs refuting. Israelitic tradition knew quite well what it understood by the word *Misraim*; and the

records about the times of the Judges are sufficiently reliable to guarantee the existence, before David, of the worship of Yahweh by the tribes who were settled in Canaan.

It is true, however, that tradition has fluctuated about the locality of Sinai. The "mountain of God," according to the most ancient texts, was not in the southern region of the Sinaitic peninsula, where for centuries that high peak was sought from which the covenant between Yahweh and Israel had been proclaimed. Moses met with Yahweh in the land of Midian,* which was in Arabia, on the eastern shore of the Elanitic gulf. It was from thence, according to the song which introduces the blessings of Moses, that Yahweh had come to find Israel:

> Yahweh is come from Sinai;
> He hath appeared to them from Seir;
> He shined forth from Mount Paran,
> And he is come to Meribah-Kadesh.†

To go from the traditional Sinai to Kadesh, which was in the desert south of Judah, one would not travel by Seir and Paran. The direction indicated requires a starting-point

* Exodus ii. 15; iii. 1, 2.

† Deut. xxxii. 2. The last line is restored from the Septuagint, as the Hebrew does not make sense.

in the extreme north-west of Arabia. Again, it seems established now that the most ancient legend about the exodus, of which the verse just quoted is an echo, did not take Israel from Egypt to Mount Sinai, but straight to Kadesh, where Moses explained to the people the wishes of Yahweh.

Moses bore, according to all probability, an Egyptian name. If it be thought that the tradition of a sojourn in Egypt and an exodus must be denied altogether, one is led on also to hold that the personality of Moses is fictitious, as that of Aaron seems to be, who is given him as a brother. On the other hand, his Egyptian name may validate the tradition of a sojourn in Egypt; although the story of the child Moses exposed on the Nile, and saved as it were by miracle, may be rightly suspect; since it is constructed out of fabulous materials for which there are many other applications, from the legend of the old Chaldæan king Sargon to that of the child Jesus flying from the rage of cruel Herod. The argument brought forward just now in favour of a meeting of the tribes in the desert, for the inauguration of the people and religion of Israel, might be urged as well in support of the traditions about Moses. As the establishment of a common worship seems to be connected with certain special

circumstances, so it is not incompatible with the functions of a person who may have been, in these circumstances, the leader in establishing a national and religious unity, as well as a priest and prophet of Yahweh. This personage may have been the intermediary between the tribes of the desert and those in Egypt; and it would be he who, in the name of Yahweh, led the latter to Kadesh. The treaty which united the tribes in the worship of Yahweh may have been ratified near that sacred spring, whose waters Moses is said to have brought from the rock by striking it with his magician's wand.

To this example, from which some notion can be formed as to the extreme complexity of the problems, and the measure of probability attaching to their solution, it would be easy to add a very large number which are only hinted at in the following chapters. There are other problems which it is now impossible to decide. Granted that the legends of the patriarchs symbolise chiefly the settlement of Israel in Canaan, it is useless to inquire in what conditions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were enabled to sojourn in the country which their descendants held afterwards, or what worship they practised. There is no interest either in searching out the primitive

origins of the tribes of Israel, or their possible migrations before the period when they are found on the borders of Palestine, and already organized for its conquest. The stages in the migration of Abraham, who was thought to have been born in Ur of the Chaldees, then to have come to Haran in upper Mesopotamia, and at length from there into the land of Canaan, are perhaps nothing more than editorial combinations to make a fictitious link with the cycle of legends about the creation, the flood, and the genealogies of the nations. These legends would seem to be less ancient in Israel, or at any rate to have another source, than those which deal with the settlement in Canaan, and the cycle of patriarchal and Mosaic legends which are concerned with the occupation of Palestine. No doubt Israel belongs by race and speech to that group of peoples called Semitic, who came very early into Chaldæa, and then founded the empire of Nineveh, who populated the coast towns of Phœnicia, and the territory of Canaan; who established on the frontiers of Palestine the little kingdoms of Idumæa, Moab, and Ammon; who furnished later the Aramæan migration, and who are represented finally in the history of the world by the Arabs. But it would be vain to pretend to try to fix the time, the place, or the circumstances, in which the

ancestors of Israel were merged with those of the nations just enumerated. All that can be said plausibly is that the Hebrew migration happened soon after the Canaanite, and was like an advance-guard of the Aramæan. The common cradle of them all was Arabia.

The proved usage, during the fourteenth century before our era, in the various countries between the Euphrates and Egypt, of the Babylonian language and of cuneiform writing for what may be described already as a diplomatic correspondence between the rulers of those countries and the King of Egypt, who was then their suzerain, is a fact of the highest importance for the history of the ancient peoples of Western Asia. One may deduce from it a long and vigorous domination, and therefore a lasting influence by the Chaldæan Empire over all these territories during the centuries which preceded the domination of the Egyptians. But it is not possible to say whether the ancestors of the Hebrews had their fortunes linked in any way with this Chaldæan supremacy. It seems even very hazardous to establish any connexion between this Chaldæan predominance and the origin which the Bible attributes to Abraham. The ancient hegemony of Babylon did not cease to affect the history of Israel and its religion, since the Chaldæan influence was exercised over

all the Canaanite populations, with which the Hebrews were in contact, and which they assimilated. It is also very probable that it never ceased to be exercised directly by an official usage of the Babylonian language, and by a certain knowledge of its literature, while the invading hordes of nomadic Israelites were beginning to penetrate into the land of Canaan.

The cuneiform texts of the El-Amarna correspondence, to which we have just alluded, do not otherwise give us any special information about the history of Israel. If the warlike bands of Chabiri, who are there mentioned, be, as is probable, Hebrews, it follows that the invasion of Canaan by their tribes had begun about the fourteenth century before our era; and no conclusion can be drawn about what their religion was or was not at that period. One would like to be assured that the writer of a certain letter found at Taanek (the ancient Taanach mentioned in the song of Deborah*) and which might be of the same date as those found at El-Amarna, was a worshipper of Yahweh. The man calls himself *Achiyami*, which might be the same name as *Achijahu* ("Jahu," or "Yahweh his brother"); and he has a very lofty conception of his God.† But the identification of the divine

* Judges v. 19.

† See Chantpie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religions-*

names is only guess-work. Let us say at least that the condition of Palestine at the opening of the Israelite invasion is not a matter of indifference to our knowledge, because whatever we can discover about the political situation helps us to understand the progress of the conquest; and all that we can get to know about the religious condition throws light also upon the ultimate relations between Jahvism and the worships of the Canaanites.

There is much less knowledge to be drawn from Egyptian evidence. The mention of Israel among the Palestinian populations, in an inscription of King Minephtah, in the twelfth century before our era, tells us no more than that of the Chabiri from El-Amarna. The inscription seems to refer to tribes which are still nomadic rather than to a people settled in towns. The names of Jacobel and Josephel in an inscription of Toutmosis III.,* only prove the usage of these names to describe some Canaanite places, at a time when without any doubt there was no question of a people of Israel. And there are reasons for thinking that

geschichte. (3rd edn.) II. 352–3. The translation given of Achiyami's letter is far from certain in its details.

* Sixteenth century B.C. The names may be resolved into Jacob-El = "El rewards" or supplants, and Joseph-El ="El assembles."

the shortened forms, Jacob and Joseph, stand for the eponymous divinities of towns or tribes.*

In comparison with the very ancient civilizations from which these evidences come, Israel and its religion are wholly modern. It is this, above all, which is revealed to us by an history of the East, reconstructed in its essentials by the amazing archæological discoveries of last century.

* See E. Meyer, 249–53, 281–2, 292.

THE ORIGINS

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS

THE roots of the Israelite worship go down to the common hot-bed of all the Semitic religions. At the same time, since it was in its beginnings the religion of nomads it differs not only from religions with a lettered mythology and an elaborated ritual, like those of Babylon and Nineveh; but also from the religion of the Phœnicians who were addicted to shipping and trade, as well as from that of the agricultural and settled populations of Palestine: and it approaches nearer to the religion, or perhaps to the forms of religion, which prevailed among the Arabs before Islam. It must be observed, however, that the notions and religious customs of Israel, though resembling those which must have prevailed in very early times among all the Semites, yet have many points of analogy with those of non-civilized races, and must be compared with the rudimentary worships of primitive humanity.

§ 1

According to the favourite theory of the last few years, the most ancient religions were forms of animism, of spirit-worship; and the practices of this worship were analogous to the fetishism of savages. Later on, under the pressure of various circumstances, by the mingling of tribes, by migrations and conquests, by the development of society, an hierarchy was conceived among the spirits; the personality of special Gods, the Gods of tribes and cities and peoples, was indicated more and more clearly: and this led to polytheism. A feeling of national pride or of theological fanaticism may have led certain groups of men to the worship of a single God, to monolatry; and by a subordination of the Gods to a supreme head, by varying systems of a divine monarchy conceived after the fashion of earthly kingdoms, there may be found the rudiments of monotheism. Thence, either by an intellectual process as among the Greek philosophers, or by the influence of a strong moral feeling as with the Hebrew prophets, men were led on to an exclusive monotheism.

It is, however, proper to observe, that animism itself means a process of reflection, and is therefore a form of religious consciousness which has not been identical throughout the human family.

Now uncivilized man can easily be imagined as conceiving and believing himself surrounded with unknown and indeterminate forces, of which he might think he understood the symptoms, and might go on to think that he had captured the influence. This, again, means reflection. But one may assert that no man ever made any start in religion, or even in self-consciousness, using the terms strictly, without any reflection at all. Everywhere the vaguer notion of powers or influences, as compared with that of spirits, must have been taken almost for a natural experience, or for an inevitable deduction resulting from that experience. Caprice and delusion only began with the reasonings by which men hoped to prescribe a method for imprisoning and directing these mysterious forces. Among primitive men this method is simply magic. But magic thus understood is at least the contemporary of religion, if it did not always precede it. And certainly an impassable barrier cannot be set up between magic and religion; since magic has existed, and still exists, under more or less attenuated forms, in religions of which no one would venture to contest the high development. Magic is only a ruder way of handling the divine. It is religion not yet differentiated from the commoner human functions; and not

confined exclusively to the category of things sacred. Magic becomes superstition as soon as religion is born, just as a lower form of religion becomes superstitious in comparison with a higher. Magic may have the fear of its object, but neither reverence nor love for it. Nevertheless it means already precaution, regularity, even hope, in the face of what is mysterious; one may not say as yet in view of the infinite.

The concept of a religious evolution is, properly speaking, nothing but an hypothesis; a convenient theory to make a setting for the *data* which are given us by the study of religions. So far as this, it may help us to a classification of the recorded facts. But we must be on our guard not to mistake this mere abstract setting for an inevitable law or the infallible plan of all religious history; since history does not show us the undeviating application of this pretended law. The fetishism of savages has probably for hundreds or thousands of years been such, or nearly such, as it may be seen to-day. The ancient polytheistic religions did not transform themselves gradually into monotheism. And as the higher religions have experienced incontestably their alternating periods of progress and of decadence, so the lower religions have known times of growth, of impulse more or less conscious towards a better state, and then a

recoil, brought on either by external circumstances, or by that dull stagnation which is inherent in all religious traditions that are once stereotyped; and finally they may go through a long decrepitude, which resembles the perpetual childhood of peoples without a future.

The monotheism of the Greek philosophers was not a natural fruit of Hellenic religion: one might as well say that the spiritualistic philosophy of Victor Cousin and Jules Simon was a product of Christianity. These results of rationalistic speculation may depend in some ways upon the religious doctrines which existed previously to them; but they do not follow from them, since they are wholly outside the living religion. They are perhaps remains of beliefs which it has been hoped might be transformed into rudiments of science; but they have in them no element of reformation or of religious progress, and they hardly appertain to the history of religion. The Græco-Roman paganism in the course of its existence went through many changes and adaptations; but it remained until the very end a polytheistic religion. It yielded to Christian monotheism, having been unable either to absorb or to transform it; or to assimilate to it, at any rate directly, by transforming itself.

On the other hand, the religion of Israel, as

we know it by the Bible, was certainly a monotheism, in which progress may assuredly be seen; but it does not appear as the logical and natural evolution of an earlier polytheism. The exclusive worship of Yahweh, which was a fundamental principle of the Israelite religion after Moses, did not grow out of a polytheistic worship by eliminating Gods who had been conceived formerly as equals of the God of Israel, then as his inferiors, and who were still honoured in his company. Yahweh, in Scripture, will not tolerate the association of strange Gods with himself; but he does not seem to remember that he had to expel any Gods who had formerly been jointly with him the traditional and lawful protectors of his people.

It is a proved fact that ignorant savages have still no other religion than animism and fetishism. It is also certain that the civilized peoples of antiquity nationalized their Gods, and formed an hierarchical notion of the divine world, in which the God of the ruling city or of the conquering race occupied the highest rank. And it is affirmed, on the other side, that clear minds, already cultured though in polytheistic surroundings, recognised or foresaw that the balance of the world could only be maintained by a single principle or by one sovereign master. Only all these facts, which are dressed up by the

historians of religion, do not amount to a mathematical series, in which every stage issues from that which preceded, and will result in that which follows, according to the logical requirements of an evolutionary system. The evolution doubtless is real, but it does not follow a regular progression; and its various manifestations shatter all the theories by which we may endeavour to confine it.

All the polytheistic religions have been more or less fetishist, but this has not kept them from showing a certain tendency towards monotheism, by an hierarchical subordination of the individual Gods to a supreme head, the sovereign of the other Gods. The majority of known religions have been formed out of many discordant principles, through the mingling of tribes and nations; and the inferior elements which one may meet with in a religion are not necessarily its most ancient parts. For they may have been brought into it by the influences of an older worship; and by a kind of survival, which often seems out of harmony with the principles of the religion in which it occurs. Because the higher religions are not produced spontaneously by the lower; and although reformers usually go to the traditions of the past for their foundation, although for their success they need a support

from the hopes and feelings of their own time, yet their personal action, inspiration, and experiences count high among the causes which have produced new religions. But, as there is never any complete innovation, so neither is there any uninterrupted progress towards an ideal conceived by the founders of religions. Preceding worships never cease to maintain themselves, in spite of everything, in higher and newer religions. Polytheism has a tendency to survive in monotheism; while fetishism, and even magic, are able to lodge themselves more or less in religions which profess a theoretical monotheism, and which were established on that principle.

On the other hand, the multiplicity, the variety, and even the external coarseness of the symbols are not so incompatible as might be thought with simplicity of faith and purity of religious feeling. That primitive man, or man come to the earliest stage of religion, has conceived of the divinity as the immediate cause of natural *phenomena*, and at the same time as a spirit, a kind of attenuated *genius*, who moves freely through space; that he has thought to put himself into relation with it by means of a material object, by a fetish of any description; this is in accordance with all the probabilities: since,

without referring to pagan mythologies, a storm is still considered a *theophany* in the Bible; and the God of the patriarchs used consecrated stones for his shrine and symbol. But if the materialised forms of the religious thought be put aside, the rudimentary notion of an all-powerful God can be detected in the natural agent, and the germ of God the Father may be discovered in an anthropomorphic spirit.

It has often happened that the fatherhood of a God has been conceived as real and physical, not merely as a moral relationship; and the tutelary God of a tribe has been imagined as its primitive ancestor. Nevertheless a moral notion of some sort did exist under this childish fancy, and the physical paternity was only a material explanation of it. Fetishism is a tangible witness to the divine presence. Whatever one may do, there can be no religion without images. The highest conception that man can form of God is still an *idol*, in the first meaning of the word, within which he tries to bound the infinite. He desires to feel God at his disposal; and inasmuch as he does not know how to conceive of him as present, within himself and in his conscience, he imagines him by his side, and wishes to control him under

his hand. He wishes also to have him on his side; and generally, in practice, he does not split up his worship among many supernatural beings, whom he might think equally powerful and equally interested in his affairs; but he has a spirit or a God who is his own special guardian, or that of his family, his tribe, his nation, if the sphere of his relationships be enlarged. This God is in fact the sole God for him; and polytheism should be ascribed rather to the mentality of the worshipper than to his religion.

A worship, then, comparatively pure can exist early, and among tribes far removed from civilization; under forms of ritual and in company with notions which to us are downright stupid or even shocking, but which are congruous with the mental state and the material circumstances of those who find in them a God and a religion. A species of traditional monotheism was thus able to establish itself among tribes which were cut off from the movements which produced the earliest nations and civilizations, as well as the first durable systems of polytheistic religion. The world, no doubt, swarmed with spirits; but the tutelary genius of the family or tribe was, from the religious point of view, the only one which existed for it, which had in

relation to it a well-defined personality and a continuity of action. It was with this spirit that was established the mystical relationship and the perpetual communion which constitute a religion: it was he who was the lord and father, the true chief, and the supernatural ancestor. A conscious and pondered monotheism issued far more easily from one of these tribal worships, than from a lettered and intricate polytheism, born of political circumstances, promoted into a national service, identified with the history of the people which maintained it, allegorizing that history more or less in its myths, and perpetuating itself by institutions which were all the more opposed to religious progress in so far as they were united firmly to the particular institutions of an highly organized society.

The notion of duty has undergone the same vicissitudes as the notion of God. There cannot be a religion without some kind of religious morality. The God-spirit stirs up a feeling of personal devotion to himself. Man pictures him in his own image, with a will, desires, and even caprices, which must all be satisfied if his protection and an appropriate reward are to be earned. So far as he is a spirit the God is to be reverenced as placable and ultimately beneficent; as a power he is to be respected

because he is aloof and sacred. But neither his goodness nor his holiness are conceived as fundamental attributes: they are rather qualities and motions, physical as much as moral properties, and their various aspects are not clearly separable. In polytheistic religions the Gods of light are the Gods of justice; and even in Job * the sun shaketh the wicked out of the earth. This is because physical *candor* and moral purity were formerly associated in men's thoughts: because the shining God, the foe of darkness and confusion, who scatters with his beams the chaos of night, the immaculate God, whose very nature abhors all corruption, was, at the same time and, it may be added, for these reasons, the enemy also of dark and maligant actions. And why is it also in Leviticus † that God requires unblemished victims, why does he exclude from his priesthood the blind and mutilated, why does he ban the lepers? It is, declares the sacred book, because he is holy; and the same reason is given, in the same terms, to forbid theft, murder, and adultery.

Acts which hurt the welfare of the tribe and the goods of its members, which hit at the God himself through his family and

* Job xxxviii. 12–15. † Leviticus xix.–xx.

clients, were regarded formerly as specially evil and punishable. But it is obvious that this condemnation was not based on a reasoned experience nor on profound arguments. That which we now describe as superstition held a large place in it. A man exposed himself to the anger of the spirits by doing such or such a thing; he was liable to a murderous explosion of that divine electricity which was diffused everywhere: his way was barred by a defensive prohibition, absolute or relative, enacted by the heads of the family or clan, or even by the priests, who were still more or less wizards and magicians; and such a prohibition was sacred, both in itself and by the ceremonial of its proclamation. For the earliest laws, it would seem, were *tabus:* the notification of things which must not be done. The penalty was joined to the prohibition. Whosoever violated the latter was enveloped in a divine curse, outlawed for a time or permanently, according to the nature of the case, devoted to the harmful powers, expelled from his tribe to which he had become a danger. Personal, family, and social morality was thus a religious morality; and it was as rudimentary as the religion.

It is from this foundation of confused notions, in which spirit hardly disengages itself from

matter, or an abstract notion from sensuous feelings, from a mass of customs which to us are strange and superstitious that there emerges suddenly the religion of Israel: the exclusive worship of a single God who has, like others, a personal name, since he is called Yahweh; but who soon separates himself from the others by preventing them from holding a place beside him.

§ 2

Patriarchal *elohism* has formerly been discussed at length. And it is less needful to delay over it now, because we talk no longer about Hebrew patriarchs, but about Semitic nomads; and we no longer try to establish a theory, about the primitive religion of the Semites, on the Biblical usage of the word *Elohim.*

That word is used, practically, to mean God; although the plural form seems to require that it should be translated "the Gods," and it often has this meaning in Scripture when there is a question of alien Gods. Some people have wished to see in this a proof of polytheism among the forefathers of Israel. Old grammarians and apologists of the Bible thought they removed the difficulty by asserting gravely that the word *Elohim* was applied to

the true God as a plural of majesty. Others have imagined that the plural number symbolised the multiplicity of attributes or perfections in God; but this explanation is a little too metaphysical and subtil. There is a detail, too, which complicates the problem. The singular *Eloh*, which is found in other Semitic languages, is not met with in Hebrew, except in poetry, to signify God, and then with precisely the same meaning as *Elohim;* it is never used with the meaning of "a God." It would seem that in Hebrew the plural was older than the singular; the latter being derived, as to its usage, from the former; and the use of the singular being relatively new, limited, and almost unnatural.

The use of the plural, then, is not a clear proof of polytheism, as if the word expressed inevitably a multiplicity of persons. On the other hand, the plural cannot have been originally a term of unity. It must have conveyed formerly an impersonal notion, though doubtless not an abstract one. It is not the spontaneous definition of a rigorously monotheistic notion. The etymological sense of the word is not clear: it must be related to the word *El*, which means "God" or "a God;" and which forms its plural regularly, *Elim*, divine beings. Force seems to be the

primitive notion attached to the word *El*, and it must have had at first a concrete and personal meaning; an *El* is a very strong, supernatural, and divine being. But we must not conclude that *El* was formerly a sort of proper name, which afterwards became common. The use of this word as a proper name, or as the equivalent of a divine personal name, is not more significant than the usage of the word *baal*, "Lord," under similar conditions. And the etymology derived from the notion of guidance or mastership, "he to whom one is driven by longing," or "close to whom one goes for protection," even if it were as certain as it is unlikely, would not prove that *El* was formerly the proper name of the God of the Semites. For this etymology would not involve an unity of being; and it certainly is arbitrary to pre-suppose a time when the ancestors of all the Semitic peoples formed a homogeneous society worshipping a single God.

Elohim, as a noun of quality, might mean "a terror," "a dread power." Hebrew is inclined to use the plural to embody psychological impressions and general notions. If the existence of plurals of majesty be exceedingly dubious, emphatic plurals cannot be challenged. The same tribes who from of old

employed the word *El* to describe their God or some special God, and the word *Elim* to describe "the Gods," might well understand by *Elohim* the divine power, without troubling about the unity or the multiplicity of the divine beings. In Israel, where the personality of Yahweh absorbed the totality of divine power, it became habitual to apply the word *Elohim* as a term of unity to Yahweh or to any other God, and as a collective or plural noun to Gods in general.

Nomads have a religion of the clan. The tribe is a social and religious unity. The group is responsible for the individual, and the individual belongs to the group. This spirit of solidarity, which makes of the tribe a petty world, with strict internal obligations, but with none at all outside itself, is summed up, as one may say, in the tutelary genius of the tribe, who is its father and ruler. As it does not trouble about the rest of the world, so it does not conceive of its God as occupying himself with what goes on upon earth and in the skies. Heaven and earth are filled with divine beings who ordain what happens. The scene of action of the God does not over-pass the limit of extension of his human family. He has his special name, and his favourite place: a spring, a tree, or a grove, a stone, or a mass of rock.

The poem which Deuteronomy has given us as the blessings of Moses to the tribes still describes Yahweh as "him that dwelt in the bush"; * and it is clear that this bush, in which the God of Israel made himself known to his prophet, was considered at first as his usual abode. That is why Moses was warned to take off his shoes before approaching it, if he would avoid being treated as sacrilegious. †

The sanctuary of the God is a place marked out for acts of worship. The rites practised there have for their sole end the maintenance of relations, the community of life, so to speak, between the God and his clients. And as it is a tie of blood which unites them, so it is in blood that they communicate most willingly. It is often by a pledge of blood that the addition of a new member to the tribe is ratified, and also the alliances of tribes with one another, if it so happen that several coalesce under the auspices of their various divinities, or of the God of a leading tribe. The common meal which took place on those occasions was not merely a sign of fraternity: it was understood as a participation in the same sacred life which had its highest source in the God.

It may be asked, whence came this God of

* Deuteronomy xxxiii. 16. † Exodus iii. 2–5.

the tribe; and sometimes an adoption by the clan has been imagined of a divinity chosen from a populous pantheon. But, if we go back to the beginning, was not the organization of tribal worship prior to the constitution of polytheism in a hierarchy of divine families? And, apart from the influence of the civilization and religion of a settled people over nomads, could one find the leading Gods of the mythologies at the head of wandering tribes? The ancient God of the tribe is still not far removed from an attenuated spirit. It is to define him too precisely, to say he is the personification of a natural force, or even the soul of an ancient chief guarding his posterity: he might approach to being both one and the other, without being exactly either one or the other. But he belongs to that world of spirits who people the air, the earth, and the waters, and into which also the spirits of the dead may return.

How, then, did they know him? Why did they adopt him? Probably he made himself known, like Yahweh in the bush. Some accidental and amazing chance may have revealed his presence, or even the nature of his habitation may have betrayed him. A link may have been forged and strengthened, a kind of agreement struck. They may have annexed the spirit by the fitting rites, and

the spirit may have given himself to the tribe, so far as a spirit can give himself. Or, rather, the question is not one to be asked or settled; certainly not with the implication that one can imagine a society without any religion, and adopting a tutelary spirit for the sole purpose of having a God: and is the personality of the God to be explained by the way in which the tribe organized itself into a conscious society? . . .

The state of the evidence, it would seem, does not warrant us in affirming that the Semitic tribes went through a period of *totemism*, strictly speaking, in which every clan worshipped some kind of animal, to which it thought itself related. Nevertheless it is not fitting to be too sceptical in this matter, nor to assert that nothing analogous is to be found among the ancestors of Israel. If the Bible is accurate in connecting with the memory of Moses the brazen serpent which was the object of a special worship in the temple of Jerusalem down to the time of Hezekiah, although the story in Numbers* about the cures worked by this fetish may only be a mythical explanation of the traditional worship, yet one may infer that the tribe of Moses held the serpent as a sacred

* Numbers xxi. 6–9.

animal: that the brazen serpent had been a symbol of Yahweh, as the bull was in the days of the kings of Israel; and that Yahweh himself in his beginnings may have been a snake God.*

If we imagine several tribes preserved by their way of life and their isolation from the relationships and the commingling which generate a practising polytheism, in which the life of the clan ensures to the tutelary God the advantage of an almost exclusive worship; where there still remains more of animism than of polytheism and mythology in the modern sense of those words; where the God is distinctly personal without being wholly disengaged from nature; where he is not the head of a divine family, but the parent of his worshippers; where the metaphysical unity of God is not conceived more clearly than the actual unity of the world, or than the physical and moral unity of mankind in its various branches; where the tribe forms, as it were, a world and a humanity limited by its God: through these comparisons, we should probably

* See E. Meyer, 116, 426–7. This author asks if the magic rod of Moses, which changed itself into a snake, was not in fact the brazen serpent; and also the sign or standard (*nês*) which gave its name to the altar of *Yahweh-nissi*.

get the least imperfect and inaccurate notion that we can frame of the very singular environment in which germinated the worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel, and afterwards the universal God.

§ 3

Before working out the historical growth and progress which were attained by these notions of God, it may be advisable to glance at the details of worship which, though insisted upon by the Jahvist traditions, betray the signs nevertheless of a more distant origin, and show in their own way that the religion of Moses and the prophets came to light through less pure traditions, which never ceased to affect the external forms of Israelite monotheism down to the overthrow of the Jewish nation, and even right on to our own times.

The chief practices of the Mosaic religion did not come from the notion of one spiritual God, infinitely just and beneficent, but from conceptions which were far less exalted; and if the original meaning of these practices was modified in the course of time, under the influences of a higher ideal, their primitive character is not less recognisable. Regarded in the light of these fundamental practices, the religion of Israel may be reduced to

circumcision, rules concerning things clean and unclean, sacrifices, the sabbath, the prescribed feasts, and the ark of Yahweh. Now not one of these details is attached necessarily to the notion of a God who is supremely just, and to whom one becomes acceptable only by purity of heart, for they all, on the contrary, belong rather to the notion of a tribal or national God. They pertain, also, to the notion of a God of nature, who lives with his people and as they do, supplying them abundantly with the fruits of the earth, and the fruitfulness of their cattle. And behind these notions even earlier traces can be detected, reaching back into the period when magic was confounded with religion.

Some people have aimed at giving a physical reason for the origin of circumcision. But granted that there was in fact such a reason, which is at best uncertain, the men who first adopted this custom were incapable of understanding it as a medical practice or as a matter of common utility. They mingled with it superstitious fancies which for us must deprive it of any exalted symbolism. To do violence to the human body, especially in a part of it which was sacred before it was shameful, and to draw blood from it, could not be an ordinary act, but was a sacrament of the highest efficacy, whatever else may have been its purpose.

It has been imagined, too, that circumcision might have been formerly a mutilation inflicted on prisoners of war, and that it was afterwards explained as a token of submission, or of consecration to the Gods. But circumcision seems never to have been regarded as a mark of subjection; and the story of the hundred Philistines whom David mutilated, after killing them, cannot be utilised in support of this hypothesis. David, in fact, did not circumcise against their will a hundred living Philistines: he brought to Saul the material evidence of his exploit, namely the slaughter of a hundred uncircumcised.*

The most ancient writings already attribute to this rite a capital importance. It is enough to recall the adventure of Moses, when he was attacked by Yahweh himself in the wilderness, and delivered by the intervention of his wife Zipporah, who, having circumcised their boy with a flint, touched her uncircumcised husband with the shred of flesh taken from the child, so that Moses himself might have the appearance of being circumcised.† It may be admitted

* 1 Samuel xviii. 27.

† Exod. iv. 24, 25. The text is doubtful, and it might read that the mark was imprinted on Yahweh himself by Zipporah, who says to God, not to Moses, "A bloody husband art thou to me." See E. Meyer, 59.

willingly that the Jahvist historian, to whom we owe this narrative, has wished to demonstrate how in Israel the circumcision of children was substituted for the earlier custom of circumcising youths at the age of puberty. The obligation of the rite may have been held binding in itself, without having any need of justification, by the natural exclusion of an uncircumcised person from every relation with Yahweh. In any case, the meaning of this savage incident would be less high. On this occasion Yahweh did not behave as God, but as a ferocious being appeasable by blood.

The basis of the equally ancient narrative in Joshua,* about the circumcision of the Israelites after crossing Jordan, enables us to infer that in order to hold the land of Yahweh lawfully the children of Jacob had to submit to a sacred mutilation. It compels us also to suspect that circumcision was not practised in Israel before the arrival in Canaan, although it was customary with the Egyptians. We have seen that the Jahvist historian takes it back a little farther, to Moses, but not into patriarchal times.

In the priestly document of the Hexateuch, circumcision is presented with another explanation, as being the indispensable condition of legal purity, and the sign of the alliance

* Joshua v. 2–9.

between God and the posterity of Abraham. The divine preference appears as the only reason for the necessity of the custom. But, whence the reason for so whimsical a choice? The efficacy which the writer attributes to it, by reason of its divine institution, is wholly in the moral sphere, and does not come in any sense from the rite itself, as in the earlier accounts. Possibly because he holds the custom to be more ancient than Moses, or rather because Abraham is for him the real father of the Hebrews, who must have borne the sign of election; and so he attaches the precept of circumcision to the call of the patriarch.

In reality, circumcision was known elsewhere than in Israel, and was practised before the supposed date of Abraham. It was habitual in Egypt from the earliest antiquity, and it may be supposed, with sufficient probability, to have been an old custom of the African tribes, made known through the Egyptians to some of the western Semites. It was not a Semitic practice, because the Semites of Mesopotamia appear to have been completely ignorant of it; and even the priestly writer does not imagine that Abraham could have known it in the country of his birth. It belongs undoubtedly to that kind of trial, often strange and sanguinary, by which among half-civilized peoples the

passing from youth into manhood is consecrated; and which initiates a young man into the social and religious life of his tribe. The mutilation itself, and the spilling of blood, under the conditions in which they were carried out formerly, were religious symbols, and these among savages are not discriminated from their effects: an agreement by blood expresses and inaugurates the adult freedom of a young man, and his incorporation into his tribe. Even this meaning need not be primitive, if the rite, as is hinted by the foregoing quotation from Exodus, were anciently a sort of homage to the spirits, so as to prevent or avert their anger and its vengeance.

When the organization of the clan was replaced by a higher social state, circumcision, rooted as it was in custom, was maintained while taking on a sense more or less different from that which it had in the beginning. It was preserved in Egypt among the priests as the symbol of a religious purity from which common men were dispensed. It was kept among the Arabs as a general custom, and a ceremony preceding marriage, losing thereby much of its sacred character. Among the Israelites its religious significance prevailed; and circumcision, maintained as an universal obligation, was a sign of initiation into the

national religion. It was desirable to assure the advantages of this initiation as early as possible, to those capable of receiving it, and thence came the circumcision of children. The use of sharpened flints for the operation witnesses to the hoary antiquity of the custom. The choice of the eighth day after birth may have some relation to the ancient practice of immolating the first-born.

The distinction between things clean and unclean, between states of purity and impurity, which fills so great a place in the Mosaic legislation, belongs to the same order of naturalistic conceptions. We are guilty of a foolish anachronism if we imagine that the terms pure and impure were, in the beginning, equivalents of clean and dirty, or healthy and unhealthy. The notion of pure and impure in the Bible is exclusively religious: it is neither moral nor utilitarian. If certain legal commands or prohibitions resulted in good physiological consequences, that was not the motive which decided the order or the prohibition. The meaning is to be sought in the ancient notions of holiness. Holy things were those of which the usage was withdrawn, wholly or in part, from man, and reserved to the divinity. Impure things were those which the divinity abhorred, and which for that reason were not tolerated

in his service. Between the two are things common, simply pure or indifferent, which might occasionally be infected by worship or impurity. It is in these forms, and with these general applications, that notions of holiness, of purity, of impurity, appear not only in the religion of Israel, but in many other religions.

A thing impure would often seem to be something connected with a foreign or a lower religion; for instance, to the worship of spirits, or of the dead. Consequently, that which has become impure was in its beginning sacred, in a wider sense, as a habitation of spirits, or a receptacle of supernatural activity. The distinction of holy and impure was made afterwards, between things which were related to the Gods and became appropriated to their worship, and those which continued more or less in the usage of spirits or of magic. The primitive identity of holy and impure is shown in that both are contagious in the same way; and that the touching of holy things requires a ceremony of purification, or if you will of de-consecration, similar to that which is required by the touching of impure things. Thus the same ritual ablutions are used in the two cases.

Why were certain kinds of animals held to be impure, and certain conditions of man and

of woman, and corpses? It may be said, speaking generally, that the reason was a superstitious fear, which counselled a temporary or a permanent interdict of certain persons, animals, and things. A harmful plant, a mischievous or repulsive beast, was mistrusted formerly as the incarnation of a dangerous spirit; or even a certain animal may have been held so sacred that man had not ordinarily a right to touch it. Everything which related to generation, to illnesses, and to death has been thought by early peoples to be involved in the working of unseen and terrible forces, contact with which was not free from danger. Hence have come the rules about sexual relations, the impurities of man and woman, abstinence from blood, conceived as the seat of life and the containing vessel of the spirit, about the handling of corpses, and the treatment of diseases which were regarded as a species of diabolic possession.

Everywhere primitive medicine was made up of exorcisms, and the doctors were priests, at least when they were sorcerers and wizards. If the Mosaic regulations about lepers be read with care, it will be seen easily that the end in view was neither the healing of the disease, nor properly speaking the measures to be taken against contagion, but the state of

impurity, of religious incapacity, one might say of divine reprobation, in which the patient found himself. If one ought not to touch a leper, that was not really because it exposed a man to the danger of catching the disease, but because by contact he shared in the leper's impurity, which brought with it some of the curse involved, and exposed one to the action of the evil spirit who was in the leper. This simple and popular conception of illness is to be found even in the Gospels, in which the space occupied by stories of possession is notorious.

The most recent Biblical texts set forth sacrifices as the natural and indispensable means of getting into communication with the deity; whether to pay him homage or thanks, or to win his protection, or to expiate faults committed against him and to appease his anger. It has been disputed how sacrifice came formerly to be thought so necessary, and so entirely natural. Admitting that religion had its sole origin in fear, many have thought that sacrifice was at first only a childish expedient to calm or forestall the rage of the higher powers, by offering presents which were thought pleasing to them. Nevertheless, since the religious feeling is not made up solely of fear, but of confidence also, and since religion

is not merely a guarantee against the divine, but is also a means of appropriating it, so sacrifice was not only a simple way of buying from the Gods a little security, but the notion of communion was associated with the notion of offering. The supernatural efficacy of sacrifice did not come solely because it was a gift accepted by the deity, but because it was also the means of forming, carrying on, strengthening, and renewing the active tie which united the God to his worshippers. The most ancient sacrifices were not meals served up to the God alone; they were banquets in which the God had, as was right, the better part, but to which he admitted his servitors with himself: it was not only homage that was rendered him, but there was an efficacious sacrament of his alliance with his followers.

It is true that in historical times, after Israel was established in Canaan, and Yahweh had become Lord of the country, the whole mass of sacrifices and ritual offerings was conceived as a tribute pertaining naturally to the deity. But the usual participation of the offerer, the prescribed conditions for being admitted to the sacred feast, the character of holiness that was attached to the things offered, and especially to the sacrificial victims, all show that the feeling of a divine com-

munion still survived. St. Paul was arguing entirely according to ancient notions when he wrote * "The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we who are many are one body, one bread, for we all partake of the one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar?" The Apostle ought to have said: "mess-mates of God"; respect for the Eternal attenuated here the wording of the principle on which the whole argument rests. "But I *say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils."

Amos declares that the Israelites in the wilderness offered no sacrifices to Yahweh.† But his assertion is contradicted by the most ancient legends, and by all the probabilities: it does prove, however, that there was no knowledge in the time of this prophet of any Mosaic legislation about sacrifices; and it means that the ritual of sacrifices, in the eighth century before our era, was, for the most part,

* 1 Cor. x. 16–21. † Amos v. 29.

that which Israel had borrowed from the Canaanites, not that which its nomadic ancestors had practised formerly. Certain narratives appear to suggest the vague memory of an evolution. Thus the legend connected with the altar of Yahweh-Shalom at Ophrah may be meant to explain the substitution of holocausts and offerings by fire for the presentation of food: Gideon had made ready a kid, and was bringing it all prepared for the God, with unleavened bread; but Yahweh made him put everything on the sacred stone, then he touched the food with his staff, and immediately flame burst out of the rock, the meats disappeared, and Yahweh with them.* It might be argued from this that the old custom of the place authorized the presenting of cooked food as an offering, but that the Israelite custom substituted for such offerings the burning of victims, or of the portions of victims which were set apart for Yahweh. But this substitution was not peculiar to Israel; and there remained in the worship of Yahweh some traces of primitive custom, since the daily offering of the shew-bread was continued until the destruction of the second temple.

We may infer that the method of conveying to the God his portion would vary with the

* Judges vi. 17–24.

opinions which were current about the deity. The blood, as a vital fluid, was from very early times the food reserved exclusively for the divine spirit, even when he lived in stones, in trees, or in other objects. Besides, the blood was specially sacred as the seat of life, and very soon there was a scruple about taking it. The other parts of the victim which were judged, for analogous reasons, to be particularly sacred and so fit for the God, were burnt so as to be offered him in the smoke. The Biblical metaphor about sacrifices of a pleasing smell were then understood literally. It was after having sniffed the fumes of the sacrifice offered by Noah that Yahweh resolved not to cause another flood. There would have been no reason to consider the sacrifices as an offering, if it had not been imagined that they brought some advantage to the deity; and the part which the worshippers took to nourish themselves with when a victim was sacrificed would have been meaningless if it were not bound to procure them the advantages of a closer union with their God.

The difficulty of tracing back the notions which produced the custom of sacrifices is caused by the complexity of the practice itself; for all the elements in it have neither the same origin, nor have been derived from

the same conceptions. It is not easy to say whether the notion of sacrifice as an offering preceded or followed the notion of sacrifice as a communion; or whether, indeed, the two notions are not equally old, though perhaps they may have originated formerly in different circumstances, or even possibly in the same. Nomadic Israel must have practised the sacrifice of communion before learning the system of offerings which it got to know in Canaan. The sacrifice of communion, too, is congruous with the life of a tribe. The worship of spirits leads more naturally to simple offerings. And certain sacrifices would seem to have no connexion with the notion either of offering or of communion. There are some which do not reflect the usual intercourse of a family with its divine father, or of a people with its heavenly master and guardian.

Human sacrifices were not unknown to ancient Israel. The legend of Jephthah, which must be the mythical explanation of some local worship, does not fail to show that the immolation of a human victim was allowed, at least in exceptionally grave circumstances. The legend dealing with the sacrifice of Isaac is not less significant; for it is evidently meant to show that Yahweh deigned to be satisfied with animals, and that he did not

insist upon the children of his worshippers, though he had the right to exact them. These notions and prepossessions imply an earlier and regular practice of human sacrifices, especially in the sanctuary of *El Moré* at Shechem,* whither Elohim had led Abraham for the sacrifice of his son. The sanctuary, in fact, was Canaanite; but the legend is not very old and deals with a worship practised by Israel in imitation of Canaan. This worship is reproved, in addition, with singular moderation; and we shall see farther on that the sacrifice of the first-born may have been practised in Israel for longer and far more generally than is usually admitted. Human sacrifice was the rule in Canaan at the foundation of towns, and even of houses. It is hardly probable that the Israelites never followed this example. When Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho in the days of Ahab, he sacrificed his eldest son at its foundation, and his youngest when he set up the gates.†

In the affair of Jephthah it may be said that

* The reading *Moriah*, in Genesis xxii. 2 is faulty. One should read, probably, "in the land of the Amorites." It was a question of consecrating the holy place of Shechem, and the text seems to have been changed because of the Samaritans.

† Kings xvi. 34. The Biblical tradition wishes to imply that these youths died through a curse uttered formerly by Joshua (vi. 26); but the original meaning

the human sacrifice was thought to be an unusual method of propitiation. But why had human blood so high an efficacy? As to sacrifices of foundation, when the victim was laid under the building, we are led naturally to suppose that they were connected rather with the spirits of the place than with a deity. Nevertheless the prevalence of the custom at a time and with surroundings in which the worship of the Gods had long flourished does not allow us to doubt that the practice was adapted to their service; just as it is certain that the sacrifice of the first-born was offered to Yahweh in the decline of the Davidic monarchy. Incontestably, too, the Gods liked blood.

The rite of the Passover is older than the settlement of Israel in Canaan: older, even, than the worship of Yahweh by Israel. It was celebrated by night; and the blood on the doorposts was for the spirit who went his rounds in the darkness, as he attacked men under cover of the gloom. The liking of the Semitic Gods, and even of Yahweh, for blood, was it not a legacy to them from the spirits? The *tabu* of blood supposes a pre-existing custom. The

cannot be doubted. After the recent excavations at Taanech, for instance, it may be asserted that the body of the elder son was put under the foundation-stone, and of the younger below the gates.

spirits would not have loved blood if men themselves had not begun by having a taste for it. The conclusion that there was both life and a spirit in the blood could not be wholly primitive; it is parallel to the development of animism; it may have caused the prohibition, and have contributed afterwards to its observance. The importance of bloody rites may have been conceived later; the offering of blood, under certain fixed conditions, which made it a ceremony of consecration, bringing the maximum of divine efficacy of which any given matter was capable, would lead on to its being considered the most solemn and important of all religious acts.

But it is not enough to say that blood became pleasing to the Gods because formerly it was thought grateful to the spirits; a ceremony with blood seems to have had in itself a constraining power over the will of the Gods, since magic had probably used blood in its most potent charms. The Bible quotes the case of a human sacrifice made by Mesha, King of Moab: this king, besieged by the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, and reduced to the last extremity, offered his son as a burnt offering on the city wall. "And there was great wrath against Israel,"* says the historian of

* 2 Kings iii. 27.

the Kings, who hardly knows to what influence to attribute the panic of the besiegers, but who does not doubt that the sacrifice of Mesha let loose against his enemies a supernatural force which put them to flight. Mesha certainly offered the sacrifice to his God, Chemosh; but it was not done to present him with his son as an offering or as food, it was to determine the volition of the God, to force the hand of destiny.

Perhaps in these extraordinary cases the original notion that was attached to bloody sacrifices reappears; and thus perhaps human sacrifices may be explained, of which the origin is not necessarily later than that of animal sacrifices. On one side human sacrifices may be connected historically with the worship of the dead, to whom it was desirable to give companions and servants; but these butcheries were not as yet strictly speaking sacrifices, and a reason for the special efficacy attributed to the ritual offering of men and animals must be sought elsewhere.

The conditions in which the sacrificers lived must have influenced the choice of victims. That choice was determined also by special considerations, such as the sacred character attributed to particular kinds of animals. Any victim, even a human one, was suitable for magic purposes and the nourishment of

spirits. In the worship of a tribe organized under the protection of a God, the domestic animals serve for the sacrifice of communion. Finally every rite, the grossest, the most absurd and cruel, which had none of these qualities for those who first adopted and handed it on, maintained itself when once established, and was perpetuated by the influence of tradition; it changed its significance according to need, but it lived on, and was held to be a necessary element in the social fabric or an essential ingredient of religion. This power of religious tradition was needed to make the sacrifice of a living being, which was a magic rite originally and in its first conception, a regular means of divine communion and propitiation; and to continue it in the religion of Israel, even when its notions of God had made such practices superfluous, and might seem rather to exclude them; and to propel, the theory at least, right into the Christian theology, which has contrived to find in the death of the Christ an offering upon which the whole scheme of salvation depends.

The Sabbath was an application of that religious interdict which we have seen exercised in regard to things and persons. In Babylon, the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth of each month, intervals

corresponding to the phases of the moon, were days either holy or *nefasti*, according to the point of view from which the prohibition of certain works or occupations was looked at. As there are certain holy places into which access is not allowed to ordinary mortals, or only under certain fixed conditions, so there are also holy seasons, which are violated by various human acts. In its origin, the meaning of the sabbath among the Israelites was not different. To sanctify the sabbath was to respect the prohibition in which that day was involved, by abstaining from work; by working, one profaned, or soiled, or violated the sabbath day. The sabbath was holy in itself, through its divine institution, as the precincts of a shrine are holy through their appropriation by the God who chooses to dwell in them. The obligation to observe it is not based upon humanitarian or moral reasons, but on a religious motive after the manner of antiquity. It is hardly necessary to say that the sabbath existed before the explanation which is given of it in the Biblical story of the creation. But, in the story itself the consecration of the sabbath is not an appropriation of that day to works of piety, it is the *tabu* which the Creator is held to have put on that day, which henceforth belonged to him exclusively, and

on which human activities were offensive to him. By abstaining himself from work on that day, God gave to man an example of the abstention which he ought to observe. It was the speculative theologian annexing for the benefit of monotheism the traditional notions of a consecrated season.

Apparently, the observance of the sabbath varied in the progress of the centuries. Many think now that, under that name, the full moon was celebrated formerly; and that the observance of a weekly sabbath, with a division of the year into weeks which do not correspond with the lunar months, is not very ancient. This division must have been borrowed by the Israelites, probably from Chaldæa; but this latter hypothesis is not otherwise established. By degrees, as humanitarian sentiment was joined to the religious notion, men began to wish that slaves, hirelings, and even beasts of burthen should be released from work. After the exile, though the primitive character of the institution was not wholly obliterated, yet, through the meetings of the synagogue, the sabbath took a leading place in Jewish life, and acquired a higher kind of sanctification by religious instruction and community in prayer.

The observance of the new moon, which was unimportant in the Law, was developed

in the Israelite worship down to the period of the exile. It was the feast of the opening month; and its object formerly was to welcome the reappearance of the moon. It goes back without any doubt to the nomadic time, and it was stamped with a naturalistic character which gradually faded out of it.

The feasts which are far better known, the Passover, Pentecost, Tents or Tabernacles, became solemn commemorations of the exodus, of the giving of the Law, of the sojourn in the wilderness, though at first they had other meanings. The feast of the Passover had acquired its traditional interpretation before the captivity; but the historical explanation of the two other feasts is less ancient. The ritual of all three shows that they were connected originally with the progression of the seasons and of the crops, and with the increase of cattle. Thus the Passover is the feast of spring and of renewal; Pentecost, the festival of harvest; the feast of Tabernacles celebrates the gathering in of fruit and the vintage. The spiritual meaning came later.

The sacrifice of the paschal lamb, a rite which contrasts so frankly with the ordinary ways of sacrifice in the levitical code, is a family sacrifice for the new year. The victim, a lamb or a kid of the previous spring, would be just fit to in-

augurate the new year. The blood on the door indicated then the consecration of the house and all the family, of goods and persons. The Law forbad eating the lamb uncooked, or breaking its bones, while it ordained that it should be eaten wholly at one meal: possibly because in an earlier time the victim was eaten raw,with its bones pounded. From all its details, this practice must have gone back to the time when the forefathers of Israel lived as nomadic shepherds. It was a sacrifice of communion, not connected specially with the worship of Yahweh, but which may in primitive times have been connected with the worship of spirits, but not necessarily derived from *totemism*, with which there has sometimes been an effort to connect it.

The feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days, was formerly distinct from the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. It belonged, like Pentecost and Tabernacles, to the series of agricultural feasts which Israel annexed from the Canaanites. It was the feast of the new bread, and consecrated the opening of harvest, as Pentecost did the close. The usage of bread without leaven, the only sort allowed by the Mosaic liturgy, is explained in the old texts by an accidental circumstance in the exodus from Egypt: the flour being carried away in

the kneading-troughs without having had time to ferment.* But a general principle excluded all fermented products from the sacrifices, as being corrupt, and repugnant to the deity. With regard to bread specially, the Bible leads us to think that anciently all bread was made unfermented, and baked in the ashes: religious custom, which is essentially conservative, retained as a sacred rite what had been the ordinary custom.

In Hebrew, the word which means "feast" (*chag*) has etymologically the signification "dance"; the feast being designated by the most prominent thing in the primitive solemnity, namely the sacred dance, the rhythmic march, accompanied by cries or chants, and executed round the altar or the place of sacrifice, while the victims were being prepared and killed. Men still danced round the ark at Shiloh; and David, too, danced before the ark when he brought it up to Zion.† The sacrificial meal crowned the festival.

To understand the real meaning of the ark, which is described as "of the covenant," the strange narrative of Exodus must be read;‡ in which Yahweh, on Horeb, made known to

* Exod. xii. 34.

† Judges xxi. 19–21; 2 Sam. vii. 12–14.

‡ Exod. xxxiii. 12–17.

Moses that he did not will to quit the holy mountain in order to accompany Israel. Moses declares that he cannot be responsible for leading the people unless Yahweh agrees to go with him. And Yahweh yields to the wish of Moses. The "name" of Yahweh was over the ark, meaning his actual presence in person, although invisible; and, as "the angel of Yahweh," who, in the old texts, signifies usually the visible apparition of God, it amounts, in view of the sojourn of Yahweh on Sinai, to a kind of bi-location, which must not be criticised from the point of view of a more developed theology. The abiding presence of Yahweh in the ark was not conceived differently from that of the pagan deities in their statues, and in the sacred boats or arks which held their images. This presence may even have been attached to two stones which, according to the old stories, were the only objects contained in the ark: if not, it must have inhered in the chest itself. The sacred stones were afterwards transformed by legend into tables of the Law. The atmosphere of dread which encompassed the ark is a notion that is still pagan, by which are exhibited the almost material localisation of the divine presence, and the semi-physical nature of Yahweh's holiness, which are outraged by a human look

or even touch on the coffer of the God. When the ark was carried about it was thought that Yahweh was carried too. The ark was taken into battle to ensure the direct protection of the God of Israel.

Such campaigns were not always fortunate. It is recorded that Yahweh was once taken by the Philistines, but that he did so much mischief to Dagon, the God of Ashdod, in the temple where he had been put, and afflicted the Philistines with so many plagues, that they were obliged to send him back.* The ark thus returned, and after diverse wanderings, allowed itself to be brought to Jerusalem by David, and was afterwards set up in Solomon's temple. After that time all trace of it is lost; and we do not know whether it perished with the temple in 586, or whether it had vanished earlier.

It is doubtful whether the ark had accompanied the Israelites from the desert. It is a piece of sacred furniture which does not agree altogether with the worship of nomads. The tradition which connects Moses with the holy place of Kadesh seems to ignore the ark, and to recognise only a tent with an oracle of Yahweh, which possibly was the magic rod, but more probably the famous oracle of the lots, the *ephod* with the *urim* and *thummim*,

* 1 Sam. iv.–vii. 1.

which Moses made speak. It has been thought that the ark was the *palladium* of the tribes of Joseph, and that it may have belonged formerly to a Canaanite God. An ark must have existed at Shechem, to which it is said Joseph's bones were carried out of Egypt.* This ark never, probably, contained bones, and it is not more certain that it came from Egypt; but if it belonged to a Canaanite God of vegetation, who died and rose every year, like Adonis, it might be taken for both the dwelling and the coffin of the God. May it not have been the dwelling-place of the protector of Shechem, El- or Baal-Berith, the God of the covenant; and may it not have been attributed to Yahweh when the God of Shechem was identified with the God of Israel, and then moved to Shiloh? However, it always appeared formerly as a veritable fetish, as much venerated and feared as a divine image.

A point less commonly noticed than the foregoing, and which brings the ancient religion of Israel very near to the primitive worships, and even to magic, is the power attributed to certain *formulae*. The blessing or the curse of certain persons, and in certain conditions, are conceived as dooms of fate which no power divine or human can change. When Isaac

* Gen. l. 26; Josh. xxiv. 32.

blessed Jacob, thinking to bless Esau, he could not take back his words, or one might say the happy fortunes which he had bestowed erroneously on his second son; and he does not dream of retracting them, nor of praying Yahweh to revoke a grant which to us would have been invalidated by the fraud. He has no escape but in a secondary blessing, which only gives to the hapless Esau something that is not excluded by the privileges given to the fortunate Jacob.* The curse of Noah weighs for evermore on Canaan.† When Balaam sets out to curse Israel, Yahweh is compelled to hurry before him, to stop him on the way, and to put words of blessing into the mouth of the oracular wizard.‡ For the curse once uttered, Yahweh himself could not avert the consequences. It is the magic power of a sacred incantation which thus passes into the words of fathers or the oracles of prophets, and we may add into the judgments of priests and chiefs, when they pronounce grave sentences and utter laws. The word is thus a supernatural power. Something divine works in its *formulae.* It disposes of things and of men; and if things be sometimes refractory, men at least obey their own commanding voice.

* Gen. xxvii. 1–40. † Gen. ix. 25.

‡ Numb. xxii. 2–35.

THE OLD JAHVISM

CHAPTER III

THE OLD JAHVISM

NOTHING is more dubious than the chronology of Israel before the time of the Kings. The accession of David may be placed about the year 1000 B.C. The reign of that prince marks the finishing of the conquest, and the establishment of an Israelitish nation; but we do not know how to make any probable estimate of the time which had elapsed since the tribes first invaded Canaan. According to the Assyrian and Egyptian evidence already mentioned, it is possible those invasions had begun about the close of the fifteenth century. The stories in Judges, which have some historical consistency, seem to refer to the later period of those obscure times rather than to the earlier. Moses would have appeared at the opening of that period as a somewhat hazy figure, but the foundation of Jahvism is inseparable from his name. The assimilation of

the Canaanite religions to the worship of Yahweh is rather indicated than formally attested, but it was the natural and inevitable sequel to the conquest. From the tenth century to the middle of the eighth there was a national worship, and only some few traits foretold the evolution which was to transform it into a monotheism with universalistic sympathies.

§ 1

The God of Israel had a name, just like the God of Moab and the God of Ammon. In fact he could not do without one, and he called himself Yahweh.* It is not known where he got this name. According to all probability it existed before Moses. It may be that Yahweh was the God of Sinai; the God, that is, of various tribes who lived in the neighbourhood of the sacred mountain; the tribe, for example of the Kenites or of Cain, with which an old tradition connects Moses, before he led the Israelites out of Egypt. Perhaps Yahweh was the particular God of the Israelite clan, whence Moses issued; and his name may have been one of the divine titles which the ancestors of the Hebrews had brought from their original

* It is no doubt superfluous to remind the reader that the name Jehovah is a barbarism, which has not even the privileges of antiquity.

country, or from one of the lands through which they had wandered. These two hypotheses are not incompatibles. The worship of Yahweh may have started in the north-west region of Arabia, beyond Idumæa; and it may have been brought to the sanctuary of Kadesh, its second country, by tribes who had lived for some time in the land of Midian; among others, the tribe of Levi, to which Moses belonged, and which seems for many years to have gravitated round the district of Kadesh. Moses would not have been able to rally the tribes under the protection of Yahweh if the name of this God had been unknown to them all; and it would appear quite certain that Yahweh was not, before Moses, the joint deity of the tribes who afterwards worshipped him. No one has succeeded in proving that the name was either of Canaanite, or of Egyptian, or of Assyrian derivation.

The etymology given in the Bible is less ancient than the name itself, of which the primitive meaning is very doubtful: it is in reality nothing but a jingle of words, like several others in the old sources of the Pentateuch; and it does not contain that metaphysical depth which has been read into it since. According to the Elohistic source, Moses himself did not know the name of the God who was sending him

into Egypt to deliver his brethren. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. . . . this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Yahweh gives his answer while withholding it. He says, further, that there is no necessity for knowing his name; and the reason for withholding it is the very puissance and sanctity of that consecrated name, which ought not to be handed over to men to be used at their caprice. But since, after all, a name is indispensable, the God playing upon the assonance of the name Yahweh with the word *ehie*, I AM, which he had just used when he declared I AM THAT I AM, said that Moses to indicate the deity who was sending him should employ the phrase just uttered, by using its equivalent Yahweh.* This

* Exod. iii. 13–15. The reply "I AM hath sent me" is obscure and inaccurate. For Yahweh means "It is," not "I am," if the etymology be admissible at all. It is possible that *ehie* has in this passage replaced *Yahweh*, when the divine name ceased to be pronounced in reading

does not mean that the God of Israel was taken for absolute being, but that he was a mysterious being, who owed no responsibility for what he was to any person. Let them call him Yahweh, without prying farther. The old author would, probably, not have been sorry to find a more picturesque explanation of the divine name; but he does not appear able to have seen more clearly than our modern critics into the original signification of the word. It cannot even be decided whether the form Jahu, which is met with in compound personal names, is older than the form Yahweh or is shortened from it.

What appears historically probable is that the departure from Egypt, and the federation of leading tribes which resulted later in the Israelitish people, was effected under the patronage of this divine name; that Yahweh became thenceforward the God of those tribes, and their sole protector. Moses accomplished the deliverance of Israel by invoking the power and authority of Yahweh. He thus founded together the religion and the nationality of Israel, by uniting the tribes in the worship of Yahweh: the exclusive worship of a deity who seems never to have been represented under a

Scripture, because the usual *Adonai* or *Elohim* could not be substituted here. Kautzsch, *Die heilige Schrift* (3rd. ed.), 91.

human form. Statues were not manufactured in the wilderness. Yahweh is the God of Israel; Israel is the people of Yahweh, and must worship none but him: these were the principles of the Mosaic religion. They are not formed upon philosophical reasonings, nor upon metaphysical conceptions of the divine unity; but upon a very active religious instinct, and upon the very clear notion which Moses himself had acquired of Yahweh, of his nature, and of his moral character.

The religion of Moses was far from being a rigorous monotheism. To find such a monotheism in the original texts, it has to be read into them arbitrarily. But a people which conceived of Yahweh as a spirit of the night, battling with Jacob and with Moses himself, stopping Balaam's ass, travelling in the ark, and if he were not actually the brazen serpent yet owning a name, like his neighbour Gods, and having like them too a people to watch over, conceived of him obviously as a definite and limited God, very powerful no doubt within his own sphere of action, and working marvels in the interest of his worshippers, but still a God amongst other Gods, though undoubtedly the strongest, the greatest, and perhaps already the best. It is, then, superfluous to point to the stage of monotheism which had been

reached early by the priesthoods of Egypt and Chaldæa; a doctrine relatively learned, with a tendency to pantheism, in no sense popular, and which has no visible connexion with the service of a barbarian God, exceedingly individual and selfish, excessively capricious and fanciful, such as the old Yahweh was.

Yahweh was originally a mountain God. The connexion of the word Sinai with Sin, the moon God of the Chaldæans, does not warrant us in turning the protector of Israel into a lunar deity. It has been observed that the Sinai of Midian was a volcanic district, and that this explains why Yahweh was a fiery God, a God of storms, and so made easily into a God of war. His exclusiveness might be due to the same cause. This redoubtable spirit, worshipped by uncultured tribes, was not softened into the patriarch of a divine family, like the deities of the nations. He was self-sufficing, and would not tolerate the proximity of other Gods. This trait is witnessed to beyond any doubt. It is not only the tradition of Israel that vouches for it. The tribe of the Kenites, which passed into Canaan in the rear of Israel, but was not merged in it until the captivity, also worshipped Yahweh. Now we find a Kenite, about the middle of the ninth century, Jonadab, chief of the clan of

Rechab, by the side of Jehu when there was a question of extirpating the religion of Baal. The Rechabites were fanatical and immovable Jahvists: they held to the custom of the desert, and continued to live in tents. The spirit of this venerable tribe is an important clue to the nature of primitive Jahvism. The clan of Rechab owed nothing to the prophets of the golden age, but it followed the way of life which was their ideal; and, like the prophets, it chose to know none other God but Yahweh. Its dogged fidelity to the ancient religion aids the historian to understand how the notion of a worship, which excluded every other divinity but the national God, was able to exist from the beginning and to maintain itself in Israel. It explains also the attitude and the grievance of the prophets.

The God of Israel opposed himself to the Gods of the foreigner. By so doing, he acknowledged their existence; and was then unable to pose as the only God, beside whom none other could exist. Israelites were forbidden to worship the Gods of their neighbours; but these Gods received the lawful homage of their own people. Jephthah did not shrink from saying to the King of Moab, "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy God giveth thee to possess?

So whomsoever Yahweh our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess!"* In a foreign country, one is far from his presence, and has to recognise other Gods. The holiness of Yahweh consists in his inviolability and inaccessibility, in his power to make his will respected, but not in the moral perfection of his nature. His character, it has been said, shows a few moral qualities, but is not precisely moral. His power, his knowledge, and above all his goodness, are limited. The God who is thought to have killed out-right those who peeped into his ark, or who stretched out a hand to save it from tumbling, is not a judge who adjusts his punishment to the crime, but a terrific being whom one irritates by approaching too closely. The least infraction of his will, the slightest attack on the majesty of his name, drives him into a phrensy; but he punishes or ignores such offences according to his whim. He is implicated in the pettiest tricks in the story of Jacob; and it is narrated that he became an accomplice in theft for the benefit of his people, when he showed them a way of filching valuables from the Egyptians: when, through signal cowardice, both Abraham and Isaac lent themselves to

* Judges xi. 24.

the stealing of their wives, the ways in which he vindicated their honour, are not far from ridiculous.

His justice is the attribute of a God who makes his clients successful, who does right to Israel by giving him a prosperous life and victory in battle. He is guardian of the national law, which is held to be just and good, and is also the expression of the divine will. So far as he punishes the violation of this law he is protector of the social order. As his name is invoked in oaths, he is terrible to perjurers. He avenges the shedding of blood, but he avenges it by blood; and it may happen that he avenges it on the guiltless. It was he who ordered the immolation of some descendants of Saul, to expiate the wrong done by their ancestor to the Gibeonites.* Nevertheless he is a defender of the weak, the widow, and the orphan; but this quality, which is in conformity with the social conditions of Canaan, only appeared perhaps after the conquest.

In the same way, a peremptory choice of both good and evil, even moral evil, is attributed to him. The more terrible a catastrophe is, the more surely is his intervention recognised. It was thought quite natural that he should exterminate in a single night all the first-born

* 2 Sam. xxi. 14.

of Egypt: it was the Passing Through of Yahweh. Plagues and illnesses were his work, as they were the work of spirits. He blinds or befools those on whose ruin he is set. He provokes the crime which he punishes. As any violent transport of the mind, good or bad, every high gift or every defect of the intelligence, were attributed to spirits, so in like manner they were attributable to Yahweh, who thus became the good and evil genius of his people. It was his good genius which in the end prevailed; but it was a long time before his mercy was pre-eminent, and one could rest with confidence under the shadow of his wings.

It may, then, be surmised that tribes more or less related, and which in their earlier wanderings had known the God of Sinai, found themselves at the time of Moses partly in the region of Kadesh, in the desert south of Palestine, and partly in Egypt in the land of Goshen. The latter must have been those who were described afterwards as the tribes of Joseph, the children of Rachel; the others were those who were described as children of Leah, and at first as Levi, the clans of Simeon, those from whom Judah issued. The tribes in Egypt, wishing to regain their freedom, plotted with the desert tribes; and

Moses, the priest of Yahweh, who was the God of Levi, was the leader of the fugitive tribes, and brought them out to their kinsmen. In gratitude to Yahweh, who had delivered them by his servant, perhaps in extraordinary circumstances and through dangers happily overcome, they entered by a solemn covenant into a federation which was ratified in the name of the mighty God of Kadesh and Sinai.

An act of this nature may explain the persistence of the religious tie which never ceased to unite the tribes, in spite of the separations and political divisions which were caused later. But the object of the union had nothing mystic about it; because it does not seem to have been formed only by reason of the accomplished exodus; but with a view to defence against other tribes, who were alien to the religion of Yahweh, and especially against Amalek: perhaps, also, with a view to the invasion of Canaan, which soon began. The conquest, in fact, was carried out in the name of Yahweh, who was held to be the actual leader of the adventurous wars. When they had entered Canaan it was always under the invocation and protection of Yahweh that the scattered tribes reassembled to face the common danger. *The Wars of Yahweh* was the title of one of the oldest books written in Israel.

Yahweh, as the God of Israel, had his official interpreters; his priests, his seers. Moses was the first of them. The priestly families, which served the sanctuaries of Shiloh and of Dan later on, professed to be descended from him. Not one of the legal collections inserted into the Pentateuch can be attributed to him; they all pertain to an Israel established in Canaan. Moses does seem, however, to have founded the *Tora*, the instructions of Yahweh; because he gave decisions in his name about matters of right and justice. These decisions were dictated to him by the oracle which was kept in a tent pitched near the sacred spring of Meribah, at Kadesh. The actual name of Meribah means "strife." The name of Massah, a place near Meribah, means "trial," and may thus have some connexion with that ancient tribunal, which certainly was not unacquainted with ordeals. And the divine word *Yahweh-nissi*, which belongs to the same set of institutions, may have an analogous meaning.*

Moses figures in an old story about the battle of Rephidim, which may have been taken from "The Wars of Yahweh." There he does not appear as a military leader, which certainly

* Nissi may be connected with the same radical as Massah. The Bible points to another derivation: see above, p. 63, note.

he never was, but as a wizard priest. While Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, fought with Amalek, Moses was on the hill above, "with God's rod in his hand." "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed."* He was, therefore, supported until the evening, and Israel's victory was complete.

Did he still accompany the tribes who assembled themselves on the banks of Jordan, to invade Canaan from the east? The want of evidence about the place of his tomb is urged in a contrary sense. But the texts on this point are, rather, dubious and contradictory. We read at the end of Deuteronomy † that Moses was buried near Beth-Peor, but that the place of his burial is not known. The first information is precise enough to exclude the second. Perhaps it was believed formerly, and according to a sound tradition, that they possessed his tomb; and the prophets, to discourage the worship of Baal-Peor, denied that Moses lay in the place mentioned. His name, therefore, remained always connected with the religion of the desert.

A new period began for the worship of Yahweh by the settlement in Canaan. The

* Exod. xvii. 8–13. † Deut. xxxiv. 6.

conquest did not happen in the systematic way described in the book of Joshua: namely, a country over-run and occupied in a few years, after the extermination of the inhabitants. It was effected, rather, little by little, through a gradual and continuous penetration, in which war without being exceptional was neither perpetual nor general. There was a mingling and an assimilation of the older populations and of the new-comers. The final preponderance of Israel was assured in the time of David by the conquest of Jerusalem. Then only did Yahweh become sovereign of the whole country. But by that time the religion of the desert had already yielded to the influence of the Canaanite religions. That influence must have been stronger in the early times, before the establishment of the monarchy; it was restrained by national sentiment, the worship of Yahweh being synonymous with Israelitish patriotism; later, it was resisted and overcome by the prophets; and certainly from the beginning there was a puritan tradition, cherished by certain more rigorous clans, especially among the priestly families who inherited the tradition of Moses, and by individuals whose exceptional fervour predisposed them to be inspired by Yahweh and to become the defenders of his rights.

The influence of an encompassing polytheism was only overcome at last by the fall of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon; but it had lasted sufficiently long and gone sufficiently deep to leave ineffaceable traces even after the establishment of legal judaism.

The Deuteronomist interpretation of the legends about the Judges suggests a very false notion of the religious history of Israel at the time of the conquest. It makes out a recurring series of complete apostasy, alternating with periods of fidelity not less complete; Yahweh was abandoned for the Baals of Canaan; he avenged himself by sending a foreign conqueror; enslaved Israel cried to its God, and Yahweh raised up a deliverer who inaugurated a time of pure religion. Now Yahweh was never abandoned as the special God of the Israelitish tribes; and it is most significant that his worship was maintained after the entry into Canaan, and amid populations more civilized than Israel, from whom Israel learnt their civilization. Nothing shows better the extraordinary force of the religious impressions which were stamped upon the tribes by the desert. But in times of peace, and in districts where the Israelite clans were intermingled with Canaanite populations, the worship of local Gods became associated necessarily

with the worship of Yahweh : according to the accepted beliefs, these Gods were lords of the soil and dispensers of the riches of the land, and they could not be ignored. In course of time they were assimilated by Yahweh, and absorbed by him ; but, prior to the assimilation, there was an approximation and a mingling of the worships. It was only in times of war, when the fate of the clans was at stake, that the God of Israel took exclusive possession of his own people, and that his worship was practised with intolerance. The old Yahweh-Sabaoth, the God of Hosts,* reappeared at the head of his troops and led them to victory. By the final success of the invasion he triumphed, and suppressed the Canaanitish deities, who were wholly eclipsed in the splendour of the victorious God.

" Let Yahweh arise, and let his enemies be scattered,
Let them also which hate him flee before him."

Such was the battle hymn with which the ark of Shiloh was greeted, when the armies of

* *Yahweh-Sabaoth* is a divine title compounded like *Yahweh-Shalom*, *Yahweh-nissi*. It designates Yahweh as God of a special sanctuary, which may have been Shiloh, where the ark was. *Yahweh of the Armies* means probably the divine leader of the Israelite hordes. The name is very old ; and perhaps it was only later that there were dreams of celestial armies.

Israel moved against the enemy. And when they halted, to encamp after the battle:

> "Halt! Yahweh,
> With the battalions of Israel." *

On these occasions Yahweh fought for his people, less ostentatiously than the Homeric Gods, but just as the God Ashur did with the Assyrians, and Ammon of Thebes with Rameses. At Gibeon, he killed more enemies with his hail-stones than the warriors of Israel did with their swords.

The book of *The Wars of Yahweh* must have described the wonders accomplished by Israel under the leadership of its God, from the period of the desert until the establishment of the monarchy. If only a few attenuated extracts have come down to us from this grandiose romance, it is doubtless because in the end its contents were found more scandalous than edifying. It remains, however, that Yahweh was "mighty in battle." † He was stronger and more redoubtable than all the Baals of Canaan, who were the petty and pacific Lords of agricultural populations. It

* Literally, "with the myriads and thousands of Israel" (Numb. x. 35–6). In verse 36 the text reads *shubâ*, 'return"; but it would be better to read *shebâ*, "rest."

† Psa. xxiv. 8.

should be noticed, also, that the stories in Judges refer to invasions which threatened the independence and safety of the populations among whom Israel was settling, as well as those of the Israelites themselves: Moabites, Ammonites, Midianites, and Philistines are mentioned. The case of Sisera is obscure; but it is at any rate the question of a sovereign who wished to extend his rule over the territory of Canaan. The victories of Yahweh over external enemies would gain him the recognition and worship of the Canaanites.

These do not appear to have been warlike. Ordinarily, they came to terms with their invaders, and thus peoples and religions were amalgamated. The case of Gideon's son, Abimelech, made King of Shechem by a population which was not Israelite, is characteristic of the situation. Nevertheless, there were cases of resistance; some towns were shut against the nomadic invaders, and small coalitions were formed against them. These hostilities occurred specially in the earlier times; for then Yahweh showed himself pitiless. If a besieged town held out to the last extremity, the *cherem* was declared, a vow of extermination, which meant the wholesale destruction of both population and property. Jericho was treated in that way, and was not

rebuilt until the days of the kings. Men and beasts were killed; the whole town was burnt, including the houses with all their furniture, except objects of gold, silver, bronze, and iron, which were reserved for Yahweh.

This terrible curse was not peculiar to Jahvism, and it would be a mistake to see in it an unusual exhibition of religious intolerance. That which fell under the *cherem* was not what was vowed to Yahweh, but rather what was not included in the vow; and the destruction of men and cattle should not be regarded as a monstrous holocaust. The *cherem*, in old times, was rather a solemn malediction, involving in a pernicious influence, as magical incantations did, everything included in it. Yahweh, like his worshippers, abhorred what was tainted by a *cherem*, and he would not accept it. It is even related, in connexion with the taking of Jericho, that the next expedition failed because an Israelite had kept back certain objects from destruction: the whole camp was polluted, Yahweh would not go out with the warriors; and matters were only put into a normal state again by burning the criminal with his plunder, his children, his cattle, his tent, and covering all their remains with a great heap of stones.* Yahweh was

* Joshua vii.

thus made the custodian of a practice older than himself. He held things under a *cherem* as things unclean; and the *cherem* was only unclean because sacred, but in the evil sense, through possession by a spirit of death. The tribes had known the *cherem* before entering Canaan, before belonging to Yahweh: they employed it now, and Yahweh with them, for the honour of the God and the furtherance of his cause.

However, a system of life in common was bound to be established, and was established soon, between Israel and the Canaanite population, as groups of Israelites settled among the people of Canaan: and it was impossible to exclude religion from that common life. We know already what the religion of Israel was. The worship of Canaan was a low polytheism, which concealed only superficially a basis of animism and fetishism, the inheritance from old times, and perhaps also in part from the shadowy peoples who had lived in the country before the Canaanites possessed it. Each locality had a special God, its Baal, whose worship was associated with that of a spring, a rock, a tree, a cave, all sacred. The altars were cut in the rock, or made of hewn stones, and were generally on a height. By the altar were the sacred pillar and stake,

the *masseba* and the *ashera*, legacies of primitive religion, but now indispensable accessories of worship, and always a sign of the divine presence. They symbolised the Baal of the place, and the Ashera or Astarte, his consort. Gods and Goddesses should have special names; and it was easy to distinguish them by adding the name of their high place: the Baal of one city is not to be confounded with that of a neighbouring city, any more than the cities themselves are to be confused. The division of the country into petty lordships, more or less independent, explains this multiplication of Gods.

The worship corresponded to the agricultural life of the population. The great feasts commemorated the gathering in of harvests and fruits. It was usually a joyous worship; because the Baals were nearly always kindly, and did not grudge the fruits of the earth. Nevertheless, the sacrifice of new-born children was frequent, and probably did not cause the least repugnance. For the most part the bodies were not burnt, as in Judah later, under the last kings, but were deposited in earthen vessels round the altars. We cannot say if this was an offering of the first-born. In any case the practice is rather a survival of old animistic and magical religions than a product

of Semitic polytheism. The same can be said of the prostitution which was associated with the worship of the Canaanite Baals. The *hiero-douloi* of both sexes were designated as male and female saints, and the term was not used in mockery; for they were consecrated personages, vowed to the Gods, and not only given to their worshippers. We know that everything connected with generation was sacred to primitive people. Religious prostitution was often connected with the worship of the Goddesses of fecundity; but it is improbable that these notions were produced by mythology, because the morality of the Gods after all only reflects that of men. This institution originated more possibly in a religious tradition which preserved, while modifying more or less, customs which were anterior in certain places to any regular organization of the family.

Yahweh supplanted by degrees the Baals in their own sanctuaries, and they were identified with him. The Baal of Shechem, El-Berith, "God of the Covenant," the God of Bethel, the God of Beersheba, "the Fear of Isaac," the God of Hebron, whose name perhaps was El-Shaddai, gave place to Yahweh, who was thought to have consecrated the old places of worship by appearing to the forefathers of

Israel. But these imagined ancestors were none other than the Gods themselves, identified at once with Yahweh who replaced them as a tutelary God, and transformed into heroes, the servants of Yahweh, and the first disciples of his religion: it was Yahweh who had been worshipped by other titles before his name had been uttered in Canaan. The ancient local fables were re-edited, so far as was necessary, to make up the legend of the sole Yahweh and his only people. The Canaanite divinities, who were considered the fathers of their people, were transformed as Gods into Yahweh; and, in their capacity of ancestors, they were grafted on to the pedigree of Israel. Yahweh did not even neglect to multiply himself a little, like the ancient Baals, according to the sanctuaries: at Shiloh, Yahweh-Sabaoth was worshipped, Yahweh-Shalom at Ophra, and Yaweh-nissi at Kadesh. But the personality of the God remained indivisible in the national consciousness, and we may say that he only multiplied himself for the convenience of his worshippers. The substitution of Yahweh for the ancient Gods was at times very rapid: before the close of David's reign the God of Israel had annexed the holy places of Jerusalem. With the sanctuaries, their rites and customs passed over to the worship of Yahweh. Even the

consecrated prostitution went on as a reverend practice. The legend of Judah and Tamar * shows that it was not thought shameful. Deuteronomy was obliged to forbid it within the temple at Jerusalem, where it was continued until the reformation by Josiah, although it had been opposed by the prophets, at least after Amos and Hosea.

Yahweh without as yet severing himself wholly from Sinai became an inhabitant of Canaan and of its shrines: he was both seigneur (*baal*) and king (*melek*). It was he who presided over agriculture, and gave the rain in its season; he received the first-fruits of the earth; he adopted the Canaanite feasts of harvest and vintage, and probably also the sabbath which the prophet Hosea mentions among the customs of the Baals, and which was really one of the Canaanitish customs introduced into the worship of Yahweh.

The simplest relations of Israel with its neighbours involved a certain communion in worship. Joining in the same meal formed a religious connexion. The legend of Joseph remarks that the Egyptians did not eat with strangers, but the Israelites made no scruple. The smallest contract required the intervention of the Gods for the oaths, sacrifices, and

* Gen. xxxviii.

meals which it entailed. Marriages between Israelites and Canaanites brought the customs of the two worships right into the household. Thus everything conspired to make a fusion inevitable.

That this syncretism did not result in a polytheistic religion, with a pantheon ruled by a supreme God, was due to the religious and patriotic feeling of Israel, which was summed up by faith in Yahweh, and was strong enough to prevent the maintenance of the Canaanitish deities alongside the God of Israel. Religious unity went parallel with national unity: as the latter was brought about by Israel, and to its advantage; so the former was accomplished by Yahweh, and for his benefit. The old Gods represented a local autonomy which had to disappear before a political unification under the leaders of Israel: Yahweh represented the unity and the domination of a conquering people. With his *oracula*, and the *Torah* of his priests: with his warlike temper, which made him the veritable captain of Israel's armies; with the system of holy wars which transformed the Israelite warriors temporarily into a kind of military order, subjected to very strict military regulations, which were its discipline; with his enthusiasts, of whom we shall speak presently, and who,

under the titles of *nazirs* and *nabis*, served him as witnesses before populations most sensitive to all manifestations of faith, and especially to the most extravagant, Yahweh imposed himself in every place when Israel gained a footing. If he had become by this time the Lord of heaven and earth, it would have been possible to subordinate the local Gods to him, in the form of heavenly spirits, as was done afterwards with the Gods of the nations; but, in these early times, Yahweh was not transcendental enough for such a combination to be possible. His burning jealousy sufficed to obliterate his rivals. The Israelite who worshipped him according to the rites of Canaan remained not less his vassal; but the Canaanite who worshipped Yahweh yielded to the exclusiveness of this new God, who was so far more exacting and redoubtable than the old ones.

§ 3

In the train of David, Yahweh installed himself as master on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. It was related that the ark of Shiloh, captured by the Philistines in the time of Eli the priest, had been sent away by them in a cart without a driver, and that it had so come to Beth Shemesh. The people of that place

had not dared to keep it, because of the deaths which happened in the neighbourhood, and they offered it to the dwellers in Kirjath Jearim in Judah; where it was lodged with a certain Abinadab, whose son was deputed to minister to Yahweh in his sacred chest. It was there that David came to fetch it. The identity of the ark of Kirjath Jearim with that of Shiloh may be doubted. David, however, seems to have been most eager to transfer this ark to Jerusalem, which would be hardly explicable if the sacred object had not a well-known past. At Shiloh, the ark had belonged to the tribes of Joseph. If its fortunes had brought it into Judah, it would seem to have been rather neglected there, all the more that the places where it sojourned remained more or less, as it would seem, in the power of the Philistines until the reign of David. He was able to recover it as a symbol of the unity which was effected between the northern tribes and Judah. His priest, Abiathar, a descendant of Eli, had charge of the ark of Shiloh.

And David went with all his household to Baal of Judah (the place was named *Kirjath Jearim*, "Town of the Woods," or *Kirjath-Baal* "Town of Baal," and it may be asked if the latter name has not some connexion with the

sojourn of the ark) to bring thence the ark of God, who is called Yahweh-Sabaoth. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill, and Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab drave the new cart. And David and all the house of Israel danced before Yahweh with all their might, and sang with lyres, and harps, and tambourines, and castanets, and cymbals. At a certain place the cart threatened to over-turn; and Ahio who was walking in front reached out his hand to save the ark, and he fell down, smitten. David, in fear, renounced for the present bringing the ark into the city; and left it with a foreigner, Obededom of Gath. After only three months, since no accident had happened to Obededom, and Yahweh had blessed him, the king resolved to house the ark with himself. These details are most significant: it may be said that David had not been familiar with the worship of the ark, and that he did not adopt it without some hesitation.

Thenceforward the alliance between Yahweh and the house of David was sealed, and it was as profitable to the deity as to the dynasty. David won the *prestige* which secured his posterity on the throne of Judah till the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans. Yahweh gained

from it the assurance of his permanent triumph over the Gods of Canaan, for the monarchy of Israel meant the reign of Yahweh over a submissive and united country. Nevertheless, if the king were vicar of Yahweh, the religion had flourished for so long before the establishment of the monarchy that the sovereign did not become in Israel, as he might have otherwise, the incarnation of the national God, and the supreme authority in matters of religion. Jahvism made use of him; gave him authority; and it was no small advantage for him to be Yahweh's anointed; he was a consecrated person. But he was not the high priest of his God, and the *Torah* of Yahweh was not at his disposal. Never did a King of Israel or of Judah receive, like Hammurabi, a revealed code to promulgate. The law of Yahweh had other interpreters. The priesthood and prophetism, two institutions which did not issue from Israel's royalty, and which survived it, were the channels of religious tradition. We shall have now to discuss them both.

The origins of the Levitical priesthood are not wanting in obscurity. There did exist a tribe of Levi allied closely to Simeon, and it lost as he did, and even more, its territorial importance. The blessing of Jacob* attributes the

* Gen. xlix. 5–7.

ruin of these two tribes to an act of violence, which Yahweh punished. The legend about the taking of Shechem by the two brethren * may be connected with this tradition. But it was not that raid which caused the loss of the two tribes. Remaining on the borders of the desert, and being neighbours of Amalek, they possibly succumbed in the long conflict against that hereditary foe, who was only overcome by Saul. The blessing of Moses postulates, on the other hand, that Levi had no other function than the priesthood. Is there here a deception caused by the same word being used for a priest and as the name of an old tribe? Or was it out of the ruins of this tribe, and by its influence, that the priesthood of Yahweh was organized and perpetuated? The latter hypothesis seems the more likely.

We have seen previously that several priestly families, and those not the least conspicuous, professed to be descended from Moses. On the other hand it is certain that the shrines could be served by the first-comer who was consecrated for that purpose. It was the same with the ark, so long as it was with Abinadab, at "the town of the woods." But a very clearly marked professional aptitude was recognised in the tribe of Levi; and Levites seem to have sought out a

* Gen. xxxiv.

ministry wherever it could be found, even among other tribes. It would be because they were a Mosaic tribe, and specially Jahvist, if we may so express it, that they enjoyed this preference and credit. They possessed the traditions of the worship that was proper for Yahweh. One may, then, see in them the descendants of the ancient priests of Levi, who had ministered, after Moses, in the shrine at Kadesh: driven thence by Amelek, and dispersed through Israel after the destruction of their tribe, the priests of Levi would have become types of the genuine priesthood. Certainly, however, they did not minister in all the sanctuaries, and all the priests of Israel in the time of the kings were not real Levites. Zadok the priest of Solomon was not. But the name soon went with the function; and the priests who were not Levites by origin were none the less attached to the sacred tribe. The blessing of Jacob ignores this development. The blessing of Moses endorses it. The personality of Aaron is like a doubling of Moses: but in the end he becomes ancestor of the house of Zadok, which held possession of the priesthood in Jerusalem, and all other sacerdotal families were simply grafted on to Levi.

The blessing of Moses defines thus the priestly functions:

"May thy *urim* and thy *thummim* be with the kindred of thy servant.
Whom thou has proved at Massah,
With whom thou hast striven at the waters of Meribah . . .
For they have kept thy word
And have observed thy law.
They have taught thy judgments to Jacob,
And thy commandments to Israel;
They offer the incense to thy nostrils,
And the sacrifice upon thy altar."

The servant is Moses; his kindred are the Levites; the origin of the priesthood is attached to the sanctuary of Kadesh by the reference to Massah and Meribah. The text refers to some etymological legends which have not been preserved in the Biblical tradition: in our records it is not Moses, but Yahweh, who is tried, and with whom there is a disagreement. Sacrifice is put in the last place because it was not yet the chief duty of the priests. For they were not very numerous in old times; and sacrifice was offered by families or clans, without the indispensable ministration of a priest. There was no priest where there was not a "house of God," a shrine with an oracle. It was the oracle of Yahweh which was the business of the priest, the reason for his existence and the cause of his reputation. The answers of the oracle are the judgments and

the *Tora* of Yahweh. It was the oracle which built up the customary law of Israel and the Mosaic tradition. It was consulted, too, for private as well as public matters. Divination was concerned with affairs of another kind. It was the oracle which was held to have denounced the violation of the *cherem* at Jericho; to have indicated Saul for the monarchy; to have revealed Jonathan's involuntary disobedience to a prohibition by Saul; to have enlightened David beforehand about the result of his plans. The priests must also have been medical exorcists; if the examination of lepers was deputed to them by the Mosaic law, it was doubtless because they had at all times been concerned with illnesses. Their jurisdiction extended also to every case of litigation, not only in matters of ceremonial and religious observance, but also in matters of law, custom, and behaviour. In matters of law, the monarchy must have curtailed their duties; for it was the function of the king, too, to judge, and his rulings were not subjected to the revision of the priests. Religious and moral education was entirely in their hands, for the prophets often rebuked them for neglect of duty in this matter. The one who is known by the name of Malachi exhibits the priests as inculcators of a good life, as depositaries of

knowledge, and ambassadors of Yahweh because doctors of his Law! It cannot, however, be shown that their teaching consisted in anything else than replying to those who consulted them. Even when they became royal officers, they represented a tradition with which the political authority had to reckon; from which it never dreamed of freeing itself, because those traditions expressed the sentiment of the nation.

So far as they were entrusted with the divine oracles in the matter of predicting the future, the priests soon gave place to the prophets. There is no mention of consulting the *urim* and *thummim* after the reign of David. Mechanical divination was replaced by living oracles.

The origins of Israelite prophetism are not explained more clearly in the texts than those of the Levitical priesthood. In the old portions of Samuel's legend he is described as a seer (*roé*); and it is remarked that the term seer was applied in those times to the persons who were afterwards called prophets (*nabi*). In reality, they were not merely two nouns which were used successively to indicate the same office, but these names were designations formerly of two classes of people. Samuel was a seer; but prophets are mentioned in his

legend, and they were enthusiasts, or it mig be said individuals divinely possessed, who made a profession of that state, and were frankly nothing else. In those days, the type of Israelite prophet, which was realised in Amos and his successors, had not yet been evolved. The prophets of the eighth century had still something of the soothsayer, but nothing of the priest. Samuel was a little of both. The prophets of his time, it would seem, were not descended from one or the other, although they were servants of Yahweh. During the time which extends from Samuel to Elisha, seers and prophets were approaching one another, until they coincided in the person of Elijah's disciple. But what Renan describes as the corybantism of the prophets was very much weakened. The prophets became seers because they had ceased to be outside the domain of reason, and they received the communications of Yahweh by visions; and the antique seers acquired up to a certain point characteristics of prophets which were more extravagant and odd than those attributed to Samuel in the old narratives.

The seer must have been prior to Jahvism. He was concerned with many things which had no direct connexion with Yahweh and his governance of Israel. He might be con-

sulted about strayed cattle, just as much as about public affairs. Balaam was a seer, and he does not come to us out of an Israelitish tradition: Israel knew of seers among the neighbouring peoples. The seer is rather the diviner who speaks in the name of a divinity, according to certain signs or internal visions, than a man possessed, if by that term be understood an ecstatic or a corybant. Thus the antique prophets of Israel, like Deborah and Samuel, were seers: they were successors of Moses, and gave oracles in the name of Yahweh. They could, when required, utter efficacious blessings or cursings, as Balaam did; for they were also, to some extent, sorcerers. When Deborah wished to send Barak against Sisera, in the name of Yahweh, he refused to march unless the wise woman came with him: "And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for Yahweh shall deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman."*

It is believed commonly that the *nabi* only appeared after the time of the conquest, and under Canaanitish influences; and it may be noticed that Baal had his inspired followers, according to the legend of Elijah. But though the evidence is unassailable, it does not follow

* Judges iv. 8–9.

that Israel had not *nabis* long before the times of Samuel, and that Jahvism did not produce them spontaneously. Amos, who repudiates being a *nabi* or the son, that is the disciple, of a *nabi*, attributes the institution of prophets to Yahweh, without hesitation, and of nazirites too.* The *nabi* wore a dress of skins, and this may be a relic of the desert: he belonged wholly to Yahweh, like the nazirite, and the two may both have been originated by Jahvism.

The ancient nazirites would seem to have been men possessed by Yahweh for the holy wars. They let their hair grow long, and drank no strong drink. These were perpetual nazirites, by the vow of their parents. Later, the condition of a nazirite became a form of asceticism, undertaken for a time, as a pious work. By a freak of the legends, the ideal nazirite, the champion of Israel and of its God, became associated with the more or less fabulous history of Samson.

The *nabis* were fanatics of another sort, but none the less fanatics of Yahweh. They swarmed at the time of the war against the Philistines; they reappeared again, simultaneously with the Rechabites, at the period of the Syrian war and the alliance with Tyre, under Ahab.

* Amos ii. 11–12.

Seers, *nabis*, nazirites issue from the lower forms of worship. They are persons who have a spirit. The seers, in their capacity of diviners, have a knowledge of omens, and in this they approach to the magician. As visionaries, they are, like the *nabis*, men with a spirit, thought to be led by a supernatural power, which dictates their oracles. *Nabis* were even, on special occasions, favoured by divine revelations. At such times their utterances, like those of the seers, had an efficacy resembling that of magical incantations, like the solemn *formulae* of blessing and cursing. "All that he says comes to pass,"* says the servant of Saul to his master, referring to Samuel. Their oracles are like lots, which bind the future. That is why the old records put into the mouth of Balaam an account of the future which is ordained for Israel. These men with a spirit are endowed with formidable powers. The legends of Elijah and Elisha are full of terrifying episodes, which witness at any rate to the fear in which *nabis* were held. The habit of consulting them was early, and the profession must have been lucrative. They used artificial means to produce inspiration, and music was one of them. Elisha, when consulted by the kings of Judah and

* 1 Sam. ix. 5.

Israel, had a minstrel brought before he gave his answer. "And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of Yahweh came upon him. And he said, Thus saith Yahweh." *

In the days of Samuel and Elisha, the *nabis* formed a sort of community, under the management of a head. Marriage was not forbidden to them. They gave themselves up to symptoms which so nearly resembled madness that the Hebrew word which describes them is the same as that used for insanity. They went about in troupes, accompanied by musicians. Their folly was catching. It is narrated that Saul, after his first meeting with Samuel, falling in upon his way with a troup of *nabis*, was drawn to them by the divine spirit, and joined in their clamour. Whence the popular saying. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" † It is obvious that such people were feared as channels of the spirit, and a little despised on account of their extravagance. The officers of Jehu did not hesitate to describe as a madman the disciple of Elisha who promised the sovereignty of Israel to their captain; but when they knew what he was urging, they hastened to proclaim as king him who was pointed out by Yahweh. ‡

* 2 Kings iii. 15–16. † 1 Sam. x. 10–12.
‡ 2 Kings ix. 4–13.

At times of crisis, under an able head, the association might play a leading part in politics, while seeming only to defend the national religion. The house of Ahab learnt this to its cost.

The separation between Israel and Judah, after the death of Solomon, was due to political causes. The northern tribes bore with impatience the supremacy of Judah, and above all the fiscal system established by David's successor. It is possible that the prophets encouraged the secession, less because of the foreign worships authorized by Solomon in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, than by his general attitude, which was that of a profane monarch influenced by the civilization of the neighbouring peoples. In any case, Jeroboam, the leader of the rebellion, was rather supported than disowned by the prophets.

The worship organized in the new kingdom was independent of the temple which had just been built in Jerusalem, and was not different from that practised in the country before David, as well as during his reign and in Solomon's. The worship of Yahweh on the high places of Gilgal, Shechem, Bethel, and Dan was traditional, and had been held as lawful as that which was practised at the

sanctuary of the ark. Until the times of Amos and Hosea, the prophets did not inveigh against that worship. Even the representation of Yahweh under the form of a bull does not seem to have caused the opposition and scandal which it produced later. Doubtless it went beyond the traditions of ancient Jahvism, and that is why it was condemned by the reforming movement of the eighth century. But it may be doubted whether it was inaugurated by Jeroboam. The intention attributed to him, by the Deuteronomist compiler of the Book of Kings, of hindering his people from going to Jerusalem for the feasts, is a sheer anachronism; the northern sanctuaries having been frequented from times far more ancient than Solomon's temple, which was only a religious centre for the House of David, and for the town where it was built. And it was not necessary, either, to invent images of Yahweh to replace the ark. Symbols of the divine presence existed everywhere. That of the bull might have been adopted as well as the stone of Bethel, and it was not more blamable in itself than the brazen serpent. The reproach of having appointed to the divine service men who were not Levites is no better founded, since the priesthood was not yet an hereditary privilege of the real or imaginary

descendants of the ancient priests of Levi. All these accusations were only formulated many centuries after the event, to discredit both the ancient form of worship, and a schism which the Jahvist puritans had been far from blaming when it first occurred.

It was probably the official introduction of an alien worship that brewed a quarrel between the King of Samaria and the prophets, or at any rate a party of them. Ahab was, so far as we can judge, a brave prince and an able statesman. To defend himself against the King of Damascus, his too-powerful neighbour, he leant on Phœnicia, and he married a daughter of the King of Tyre. One consequence of this alliance, which brought foreigners to Samaria, was the building of a temple to Baal-Melcarth. The protest of Jahvism was embodied in Elijah, who had also denounced the judicial murder of Naboth. That affair was nothing extraordinary in an oriental country; but the conscience of Israel, formed by the *Torah* of Yahweh, had already attained a standard of justice which would not tolerate such a violation of right. The intrusion of the Tyrian Baal was a far more serious matter. It was an injury to the majesty of the God of Israel on his own territory, although Yahweh remained the national God, and did not cease

to be honoured as such by Ahab and his two sons who reigned after him. That the opposition of Elijah was not founded upon any principle of rigorous monotheism is proved by the fact that, according to his legend, he lived without scruple at Sarepta, in pagan territory, with a widow who certainly practised the worship of her country. But all the policy of Ahab, which was wise to those who thought only of the prosperity of the kingdom, was equally condemned by the zealots of Jahvism, because their God refused to share any of his honour with others. And Yahweh, who was the only lawful master of Israel, was he not able also to protect it?

Nevertheless, Ahab was popular, and all the prophets were not against him. It was only under Joram, his son, and his second successor, that an army plot, encouraged or even provoked by Elisha, set Jehu on the throne. Jehu was the candidate of the prophets; and the motto of the revolution was a rupture with Tyre, and the expulsion of its Baal. The Jahvist reaction was stained by the most odious murder, and was practically limited to an expulsion of the foreign worship. Jehu was helped in his bloody task by Jonadab, the chief of the Rechabites. If there were then no reformation of the national worship, it was

because the most zealous Jahvists did not see any need for it. The Ephraimite kingdom was none the less enfeebled, and it was only under the grandson and the great-grandson of Jehu that it rallied for a time, when the power of Damascus was broken by the Assyrian conquerors. The old Elisha, as long as he lived, supported the house of Jehu. It is said that on his death-bed he foretold the victories of Israel over the Syrians. King Joash, grandson of Jehu, had come to see him; and the *nabi*, in this instance one might still say the magician, ordered him to strike some arrows on the ground: Joash obeyed, and smote thrice; "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." *

From these times onward, it is clear that prophecy and royalty will be unable to agree, if royalty considers its interests, seeks necessary alliances abroad, and if it does not reckon with the sentiment of the men of God. The force of the religious tradition which, by the prophets, overthrew the dynasty of Ahab in Israel, re-established by the priests the family of David in Jerusalem, after the usurpation of

* 2 Kings xiii. 19.

Athaliah. Everywhere the religious question intruded, became more and more acute, and rendered impossible the normal working of a secular monarchy. Jahvism prepared the ruin of the Hebrew states. It may be pointed out, in compensation, that these petty kingdoms must inevitably have perished, like their neighbours; and the prophets secured the perpetuation of Israel, through its religion.

PROPHECY

CHAPTER IV

PROPHECY

ONE of the most singular characteristics of Jahvism is assuredly the evolution which out of the seer, diviner, and sorcerer, out of the raving enthusiast, produced the prophet of the last period of the monarchy; the judge of kings, the defender of the poor, the preacher of righteousness, always preoccupied with a future by the traditions of his office, but subordinating his predictions to his moral teaching. Prophecy became the interpreter of a religion that condemned all methods of divination, using the term accurately. Nevertheless, some traces of its origin remained until the last vestiges of a Jewish nationality had vanished. The religious ideal was being continuously purified; but the scheme and notion of a future, whose course it was thought possible to fix, survived in a Judaism petrified under the Law, and even under the

Gospel though it had shaken off the legal fetters. An imperious preoccupation with the future fell away from Judaism and Christianity only when they had become religious organizations without any national setting, and had thus transfused the greater part of their expectations into an immortality which is imagined to provide an equitable and immediate compensation for the present life, by atoning for its miseries and injustice. The zenith of prophecy in Israel was attained at the epoch of the Assyrian invasions, and it did not last after the destruction of the Judaic monarchy by Nebuchadnezzar. This was the period of the prophets who wrote, and it was also the beginning of the Law.

§ 1

The intrusion of Assyria into Palestinian affairs drove the prophets to look far beyond the frontiers of Israel; and to frame larger and deeper conceptions of the world and of mankind, and consequently of God. Their political horizon, was enlarged indefinitely: their conception of the providential government, of its laws and plans, widened in proportion; but Yahweh still held the primacy which had been his formerly. Whence came this victorious people? Who gave it its high fortune? Why

did it prevail against Israel? These were the tragic and practical questions which clamoured for an immediate answer; and which the prophets could only decide by the principle of a moral monotheism, unless they were to repudiate their special tradition of a just and almighty God, and so degraded Yahweh to an equality with the Baals whom they had always regarded with contempt. It must be Yahweh who stirred up the King of Asshur because everything which happens in the world is caused by Yahweh's will. It must be Yahweh who made the King of Assyria succeed, and not the Gods of his own country; because Yahweh is the real master of heaven and earth. If Yahweh allows the Assyrian king to oppress Israel, it is because Yahweh himself is angry with his people, and angry with good reason. They have not served him as he wishes: they have worshipped other Gods, in spite of his prohibition; they thought to have honoured him sufficiently by their sacrifices, he who requires above all things the practice of righteousness, respect for duty, and fidelity to his Law.

But, in spite of having become the lord of heaven and earth, and the disposer of history, the God of the prophets before the captivity is not yet the sole and absolute God. He is

always merely the God of Israel: he is really occupied with his own people alone, and is only concerned with other nations so far as to use them as instruments for those designs. And when, after the terrible judgment which they predicted for that guilty people, they foresaw a restoration, it is always Israel that is in question, and not mankind. No doubt Yahweh had separated himself so far from the other Gods that it was no longer possible to consider him in the same rank with them, and he had left them scarcely any influence in the administration of the universe. But these Gods were not yet reduced to the rank of inferior spirits: they were not yet condemned to non-existence, though they were Gods for whom there was not any farther use.

While the prophets of the eighth century, Amos, Hosea, Micah, required that men should obey the Law of Yahweh, they do not refer to any written law. It seems that only a part, and not the least important, though the least considerable in bulk, of the statutes which are now in the Pentateuch was written in their times. If one or other of those first collections are found more or less in agreement with what the prophets held to be the religious, moral, and social duties of every Israelite, they did not constitute the whole Law of Yahweh; for that also

included the teaching given by the prophets themselves in the name of the God of Israel. It may be admitted freely that the Jahvist decalogue, which is contained in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, and that part of the same book which is known as *The Book of the Covenant*, represented for the eighth and ninth centuries the written commandments of the divine Law.

The decalogue may have been constructed thus:—

Thou shalt not worship any foreign God.
Thou shalt not cast any molten Gods.
Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread.
[Thou shalt give] me all the first-born.
Thou shalt solemnize the feast of weeks,
And the feast of the vintage at the year's end.
Thou shalt not mix with leavened bread the blood of my victim.
Nothing of the Paschal victim should remain till the morning:
Thou shalt bring the first-fruits of thy harvest into the house of Yahweh thy God.
Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.*

* Exod. xxxiv. 14–26. The text has been liberally commentated, and the reconstruction of the ten precepts is hypothetical. The commandment about the Sabbath is omitted here, v. 21, because it is not in its place between instructions about the three great feasts, and it is rather a commentary on the Sabbath than a commandment. The command about the first-born is retained, because it is not

This little *Torah* is exclusively ritualistic: we may believe it is of priestly origin, and undoubtedly it is earlier than the first writing prophets, who attached no importance to ritual. But it displays the exclusive worship of Yahweh, by ordaining the feasts which we may describe as national: the Passover and the Unleavened Bread, the feasts of the harvest and the vintage. The prohibition of molten images may be directed already against the bulls of Dan and Bethel. If the document did not originate in Jerusalem, "the house of Yahweh" would mean every sanctuary whither first-fruits could be brought to the priests.

The *Book of the Covenant** lays down the principles of domestic and social morality, and at the same time the essential regulations of worship. Unity in the place of worship is expressly denied. "An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in any place where I cause my name to be remembered I will

unconnected with the Paschal victim; but the text seems to be vitiated, and the words "thou shalt give" have been added for the sake of the parallelism, according to Exod. xxii. 28. The original meaning of this commandment will be shown later.

* Exod. xx. 22; xxiii. 23.

come unto thee and I will bless thee. And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."* Simple orders, for a worship that has nothing in common with the gorgeous construction of stone and metal which made the temples of Solomon and of the restoration conspicuous. It is the description of a sanctuary which might exist in the smallest centres of population. The Book of the Covenant demands also for Yahweh all the first-born, and the first-fruits. It strikes with the *cherem*, the curse of blood, whoever sacrifices to any other God than Yahweh.

But one ought to sacrifice to Yahweh. The prophets before Amos never dreamed of preaching a centralization of worship in Jerusalem; and even Amos and Hosea while protesting against the forms of worship, made no protest against the multiplicity of sacrificial places. Before then no one had suspected that the system of sacrifice might lead to abuses. Everything went on as though worship were guided only by a traditional custom, which authorized sacrifice in all the towns and

* Exod. xx. 24–26.

villages, though with a decided preference for certain shrines which were specially venerated.

It is no less true that the prophets after the middle of the eighth century condemned the worship that was practised in their time; and which, for the most part, resembled that which was sanctioned by the documents just quoted. Nevertheless, they are not conscious of innovating, though they rebuke a religious, political, and social state to which the preceding centuries had conformed. Their claim of going back to the beginning is usual among religious reformers. It involves, none the less, an impossibility. The past can never be revived, except under new forms; and the prophets in effect renewed the meaning of the old creed: Yahweh is the God of Israel, and Israel is the people of Yahweh. For the requirements of God had risen into the moral order, and were no longer chiefly ritual; and the morality in question was not identical with custom. It was acquiring the absolute character of ideal justice, though it was of necessity still affected by date and environment. Yahweh was considered as united to Israel by his free choice, which he could withdraw, and not by a kind of natural and irrevocable fatality. He explained contemporary events by means of his prophets, according to

the principles of wisdom and justice; for they are no longer manifestations of a more or less arbitrary decree.

The notion of the ruin of Israel by the judgment of its God could never have been formed by the old Jahvists: nor was it accepted, any more, by the mass of people who were upbraided by the prophets for their infidelity. Nevertheless the prophets did not allow that an opinion other than their own might be held on all these questions. The faith which possessed them was a hindrance to grasping the reality of the past, or the true relation of the present to that past which they interpreted capriciously through their own conceptions of it. They did not speak of Israel's life in the desert by any reliable tradition; but they fashioned an ideal for themselves, which they contrasted with the abuses of the present.

They must not, however, be imagined as entirely aloof from the ordinary beliefs of their time. Hosea, for instance, describing the future condition of Israel in exile, speaks thus of the offering of the first-fruits, and of its necessity:

> "They shall not pour out wine to the Lord.
> Neither shall they be pleasing unto him:

Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners ;
All that eat thereof shall be polluted :
For their bread shall be for their own appetite ;
It shall not come into the house of Yahweh." *

As it was impossible to offer the first-fruits of the harvest, all the produce of the earth is contaminated, like the bread used at funeral banquets: they themselves are not holy, but impure, like everything belonging to the spirits.

These uncompromising believers are quiet spirits compared with the frenzied *nabis* in former times. They bore, however, the same name and dress. They were always visionaries, who mistook for revelations of Yahweh the conceptions which swarmed in their own heads. Their symbolical actions are another proof of their excitability. Isaiah walked without clothes and shoes in the streets of Jerusalem, like a prisoner of war, to show the fate of those who would oppose the King of Assyria. Jeremiah carried a yoke on his shoulders, to show the necessity of submitting to the King of Babylon: another prophet tore off his yoke and smashed it, to proclaim the deliverance. Ezekiel went still farther; but he belonged to the decadence of prophecy, and many of his figurative acts were probably

* Hosea ix. 4.

mere written symbolism. It should be noted, that in the time of Jeremiah and perhaps long before, the officials of the temple in Jerusalem included special inspectors or overseers of the prophets; and that in the out-buildings of the sanctuary there was a prison where excitable and unruly *nabis* were put in the stocks. This appeared quite natural, and Jeremiah himself made acquaintance with that prison.*

The first prophets who are described as writers were something very different from men of letters. Their oracles were still a verbal teaching, like the *Torah* of the priests; but they were generally rhythmic, and in the form of brief declamations. The prophets did not think of writing until their preaching was not listened to, or was prevented. Thus Jeremiah, after twenty years of his ministry, dictated to Baruch the whole series of menacing predictions which he had uttered from the beginning; and he sent his disciple to read them in the temple, so as to produce a greater effect than by a single prophecy. The reading made a stir; but the king's men seized the book, and Jehoiakin burnt it. Jeremiah had to repeat his dictation, though the reading was not repeated.† Generally, it was the disciples of the prophets who collected their predic-

* Jer. xx. 1–3, xxix. 26. † Jer. xxxvi.

tions, so that their accuracy might be proved by the event.

Nothing was impossible to faith: that accuracy, almost invariably stultified by facts, did not fail to be asserted by Jewish and Christian tradition. The texts have been frequently corrected or completed afterwards, and the interpretation was always indulgent. And even at present, when it is asserted that the utterances of the prophets were a preaching, and when this characteristic is exaggerated, it is urged freely that their threats and promises were conditional, and that their accomplishment depended on the repentance or the obduracy of Israel. That condition may be found in some cases; but more often the prophets thought they were making certain and absolute predictions. Their credit rested on their supposed knowledge of the future. It was by reason of this imagined knowledge that they were consulted, and in their confidence of that knowledge they answered. And ordinarily, as was natural, the event did not confirm either their menacing or their favourable provisions, in the ways they had indicated. As far as regards particular predictions about individuals, the prophets were only experienced diviners, who were dominated by considerations of morality. It can hardly be said that they

foresaw the future of their religion; for the histories of Judaism and of Christianity have differed widely from their preconceptions. What is true is that their glowing hope has in a certain measure created the object of it, by ensuring the preservation of their beliefs.

§ 2

"Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing,
But he revealeth his secret with his servants the prophets;
The lion hath roared, who will not fear?
The Lord Yahweh hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" *

So says Amos, of Tekoa in Judah, whom the divine inspiration had taken from his flocks, to lead him to Bethel, and to make him prophesy there against Ephraim, in the time of Jeroboam II. Before him, "the day of Yahweh" meant the triumph of Israel over its enemies. For him "the day of Yahweh" is the day when the God of Israel chastises his people. A nation whom he does not name, but which can only be Assyria, will come and remove Israel out of its country. Worship is corrupt, the great men are greedy and oppress the small: Israel is of no more account with

* Amos iii. 7–8.

Yahweh than the Philistines and the Aramæans; it will be exterminated from the earth.

Amos is all pessimism. His successors are no less; but they do not rest, and could not rest, in the prospect of a ruin which would leave Yahweh without any worshipper on earth. A reign of justice will come after the great catastrophe. The notion of chastisement is not less conspicuous among the prophets before the captivity. Their passion in foretelling the destruction of their country seems at first inexplicable. Is it an understanding of the situation, and of the political future of the East? Certainly they guaged the inevitable fate, which awaited the petty states of Palestine, better than the sovereigns and their ministers. Though it was evidently not their clear vision which made them pessimists, but their pessimism which made them see clearly. They think everything goes from bad to worse in religion and society: menace from abroad comes abundantly to satisfy their appetite for chastisement. Neither should the grim character, which Jahvism drew from its origins, be forgotten, nor the ferocious temper of its God. The moment his people were thought not to be giving him satisfaction, the rage of Yahweh knew no half measures. Possibly he had become even more terrible since he had learnt to be

more exacting morally. Was he not the God who to cure the evils of humanity had destroyed it entirely by a flood?

Some fifteen years after Amos, there came Hosea. Deceived by his wife, the prophet discerned in that infidelity a figure of Israel's offences against its God. He would not allow that the religion of his people resembled that of the natives; but he finds that the worship of Yahweh, as it is practised all about him, is merely a service of Baal. Israel is an idolater from the beginning. Yahweh says by his prophet:

> "As grapes in the wilderness,
> I have found Israel;
> As the first ripe on the fig-tree in her season,
> I saw your fathers:
> But they all went to Baal-Peor,
> And bowed themselves to Baal" *

Hosea talks with a superb disdain of the calf of Bethel. He considers that royalty was established in spite of Yahweh, and that it is one of Israel's sins. Not in him will be discovered the notion of a messianic prince.† Idol and king will perish together, without recovery. Hosea names the executor of the

* Hosea ix. 10.

† Hosea ii. 1–3 and iii. 5 are regarded as interpolations.

divine judgments: the King of Assyria. During his time, in fact, Menahem was tributary to Tiglath-Pileser. Hosea condemned the efforts made to propitiate that earthly ruler, though the King of Samaria could not help himself. But help should not be sought from any human power. Yahweh alone is the sufficing aid.

This repudiation of foreign alliances was not due only to trust in the God of Israel, but to the fact that alliances with the foreigner meant also a covenant with his Gods, and an official recognition of them. The good feeling and the relations that followed would certainly lead on to acts which would be blamable by faith. But it is evident that the policy of the prophets was not politic, and that it must end in the ruin of the state.

Notwithstanding these gloomy prognostications, Hosea was not hopeless. The reconciliation which was made in his own household prefigured that which would occur between Yahweh and his people, after the impending punishment. This was the earliest outline of the kingdom of God; but the conception remained vague; and the future happiness was limited to Israel, but an Israel purified.

Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem about the year 740, and he was prophesying still in 701.

He had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Sargon, in 722, and twenty-one years later the devastation of Judah by the armies of Sennacherib. In the earlier time, condemning the state of religion, almost as Amos and Hosea had, he foretold the ruin of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians. He saw corruption and injustice everywhere. Yahweh will punish, but not without relenting and making exceptions. A son of the prophet was named *Shear-Jashub*, "the remnant shall return," to show that a body of righteous persons will survive the great trial and perpetuate the chosen race. Belonging to a country in which monarchy was powerful and reverenced, he conceived the Israel of the future governed by a blameless king. He even regarded Yahweh as a king who, from his throne, governed all the dwellers upon earth; and it has been said, with reason, that the universal monarchy of Assyria helped him to imagine the universal monarchy of God.*

Like Hosea, he wished to supersede all politics by trust in Yahweh. In 734, the very existence of Judah was threatened by a coalition between Rezin King of Damascus, and Pekah King of Israel. By the rules of common sense, the kingdom could only be safe under the protection of Assyria, and by giving tribute to Tiglath-

* Smend, 220.

Pileser. Isaiah wished that there should be no dealings with him. By order of Yahweh he presented himself, with "The-Remnant-Shall-Return," before Ahaz, and assured him that his enemies could not prevail against him. As a guarantee of the divine word, he offered the king a choice of miracles. Ahaz, whose mind was made up, and who shrunk from seeing a miracle, evaded skilfully by saying he would not tempt Yahweh. This roused the anger of the prophet, who predicted the near ruin of Damascus and of Israel, and the laying waste of Judah. The prudent policy of Ahaz having borne its fruits, and the threatened danger proving imaginary so far as Judah was concerned, Isaiah recommended submission to the King of Assyria, and resisted the plan of an Egyptian alliance, which was formed later with a view to regaining independence. Yahweh himself would destroy Assyria after his people had been sufficiently punished. Hezekiah allied himself to Egypt, and revolted definitely against Sennacherib: and Isaiah blamed him for wishing to be saved by human means; he gave warning of a certain disaster, but asserted that Jerusalem and the temple would not perish.

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help;
And stay on horses, and trust in chariots,
Because they are many;

"And in horsemen because they are very strong:
But they look not to the Holy One of Israel,
Neither seek they Yahweh. . . .
Now the Egyptians are men, and not God;
And their horses flesh, and not spirit.
And when Yahweh shall stretch out his hand,
Both he that helpeth shall stumble,
And he that is holpen shall fall. . . .
Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword,
Not of man; and the sword not of men
Shall devour him . . . Saith Yahweh
Whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."*

Now it happened that Sennacherib, victorious, and with only Jerusalem to take, was obliged to retire into his own country without gaining the city; and he was satisfied with a tribute, which seems to have been paid loyally until the end of the Assyrian empire.

For once, the event confirmed the prophecy; and possibly it was after the deliverance of Jerusalem, and under the influence of the accomplished prophecy, that the religious reform took place, which is attributed to Hezekiah in the Book of Kings. It is needless to ask what would have happened if Jerusalem had perished in 701. A prophecy would equally have been realized, since Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, had said:—

* Isa. xxxi. 1, 3, 8, 9. In the last passage, the fire of sacrifice is meant: see xxx. 33.

> "Zion shall become a ploughed field,
> Jerusalem shall be a heap of ruins,
> And the temple hill a high wood." *

But, if Micah had been right, the Jahvism of Judah would not have left more trace in history than that of Israel. It remains that Hezekiah carried out a reformation of worship according to the wishes, apparently, of the prophets.

We cannot say with confidence what was the purpose of this reform; as the records which we have of it are not contemporary. Perhaps the king wished to do in reality, though with less rigour in detail, what was done afterwards by Josiah; to destroy idolatry, and to centralise the Judæan worship in Jerusalem. But it is well to notice that if the reformation happened immediately after the deliverance of the city, in 701, Hezekiah then possessed no more than his capital; and we do not know when or how the towns captured by the Assyrians were restored. The most certain and striking incident of this purification of worship was the destruction of the brazen serpent, which had never ceased to be worshipped in the temple. War, then, was declared against images of the deity.

The movement had no permanence; perhaps

* Micah iii. 12.

because a sufficiently high sanction was not attached to the new state of things. The reformation does not seem to have been authorized by any traditional record of undisputed weight, nor to have been embodied after the event in a Law which the prophets could back up as an expression of the divine will. It was the personal action of Hezekiah and his spiritual advisers; it fell with the king who had supported it, and the polytheistic leanings which had been shown slightly under Ahaz, perhaps in consequence of the relations with Assyria, reappeared and triumphed politically under Manasseh.

§ 3

As the domination of Assyria continued to extend, the almighty power of Yahweh was not proved so clearly. For the first time, probably, polytheism was introduced into the temple of Zion. Manasseh admitted there the worship of the stars, after the manner of Assyria, and especially the chariot of Shamash, the Sun-God; and he ventured to place the "Queen of Heaven" by the side of Yahweh. The people joined willingly in these novelties; on the roofs of the capital, they set up altars to the Gods of the sky. This invasion of Assyrian worship was not caused only by the

private tastes of the king; but was due as well to the political situation of the kingdom, which was more strictly subjected to the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbannipal, who were for long masters of Egypt, than it had been to Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib. Assyria overran Jerusalem with its armies, its civilization, and its Gods: Manasseh and his people served the new masters, both earthly and heavenly. We do not know how the worship of these strange Gods was combined with that of Yahweh, who remained the national God. Perhaps a kind of local hierarchy was arranged, in which Yahweh kept the first place, and this may not have been without influence upon the conceptions of the following age; perhaps the foreign Gods may have been made into celestial spirits, to whom Yahweh delegated the government of the peoples.

The traditions of Canaan were not neglected. The sacrifice of the first-born was a custom regularly practised. If we may believe the prophets, the sacrifices were made to Moloch. But the same prophets make us understand that those who followed this practice believed they were honouring Yahweh. Certain critics are not willing to admit the antiquity of this custom in Israel; and some even challenge what the Book of Kings relates of Ahaz, who sacrificed

the eldest of his children. But Israelite antiquity did not know our way of estimating human life; it understood quite differently both the rights of parents over their children, and the modes of doing honour to the Gods. The texts are not limited to hindering the extension of a practice abominable in itself, but not more ridiculous than the sacrifice of cattle. Jeremiah believes himself compelled to say that Yahweh had never ordered tophet to be set up in the valley of Hinnom, a place consecrated to the sacrifice of children by fire;* therefore this worship was connected with the God of Israel. Ezekiel seems to contradict Jeremiah, but he is more accurate when he makes Yahweh himself say:

> "I gave them statutes that were not good
> And judgements wherein they should not live;
> And I polluted them in their own gifts
> By making them burn each first-born:
> It was to destroy them,
> So that they might know I am Yahweh." †

A favourable exegesis can say that the prophet speaks according to the belief of his readers, as to the obligation of such sacrifices; but it is certainly he himself who judges the custom as bad, and attributes it to Yahweh as

* Jer. vii. 31, xix. 5. † Ezek. xx. 25–6.

such. The precision of his language raises the suspicion that a text existed in the Law, containing the traditional *formula* on this matter. And such a text did exist. We read in *The Book of the Covenant:* "Thou shalt not "delay to offer the first-fruits of thy threshing-"floor and wine press. Thou shalt give me the "first-born of thy sons; and thou shalt do the "same with thy cow and thy sheep. He shall "be seven days with his mother; and on the "eighth day thou shalt give him to me." * The text is clear, and the assimilation to the first-born of the flock is sufficiently eloquent. Doubtless, the compilers of the Pentateuch interpreted this order by others, where there is a question of ransom; but the text in itself does not provide for this substitution, and one may add excludes it. The *formula* of the oldest decalogue, quoted previously: "Every first-born belongs to me," † had originally the same interpretation; and the adapter of the passage understands it indifferently of men and cattle, though he is careful to note the obligation of ransom for men.

It should be noted, too, that the combination of ransom or of a substituted offering could only originate in minds to which the notion of immolating was familiar and natural. Nothing

* Exod. xxii. 29-30. † Exod. xxxiv. 19.

is gained by saying that the regulation which is admitted for the produce of cattle was only applied systematically to man as a reminder of duty. The very assimilation reveals a mentality still very near to that of people who found it equally needful and believed it equally expedient to sacrifice to Yahweh their first child as to offer him the first-born of their cow or their goat.

We have already considered the historical bearing of the legends about Jephtha's daughter and the sacrifice of Isaac. The failure to protest among the prophets of the eighth century cannot be alleged as disproving the custom of sacrificing children in their time; for they may have been less shocked by it than we are willing to admit. Hosea seems to allude to it.* Micah † speaks of the sacrifice of a first-born as of a thing just as normal as the sacrifice of a calf or a lamb: he puts it aside on precisely the same grounds, by saying that it is necessary to practice righteousness. Isaiah himself, who must, it is said, have protested, if Ahaz had really sacrificed his son; (and may he not have done it without the

* Hosea xiii. 2, a dubious text.

† Micah vi. 7. The passage is not less striking even if it be by another prophet, a contemporary of Manasseh, as some allow.

fact of his protest coming down to us?) Isaiah speaks of tophet as a man who is not otherwise scandalized by it: he wishes to see all the Assyrians burnt in it as a splendid holocaust to the Holy One of Israel:

> "A tophet is prepared of old;
> Yea for the king it is made ready.
> He hath made it deep and large,
> Straw and wood in masses:
> The breath of Yahweh, like a sulphurous flood,
> Shall kindle it."*

From this passage it may be inferred that the *tophet* existed in the time of Hezekiah, and doubtless long before. Isaiah does not shrink from the pyre of Moloch being kindled by Yahweh himself; and this approximation would be impossible, even metaphorically or jestingly, if Yahweh were not Moloch. But Isaiah knows "Yahweh-Melek."

Though the state of the documents does not allow us to affirm, it does at least enable us to conjecture, that the tophet of the valley of Hinnom, the future gehenna, was a holy place in Jerusalem before the conquest of the city by David; and that human sacrifices were offered there, especially the sacrifices of children and first-born, to the God of the city, to its

* Isa. xxx. 33.

Melek. Yahweh would have inherited the divine title, the sanctuary, and the sacrifices, without however a complete loss of all memory of what the original worship of the place had been. In the time of Manasseh, this worship was more flourishing than ever; and as the growth of polytheism provoked a Jahvist reaction, the strongest known since the settlement in Canaan, that reaction condemned the worship, perhaps for the first time in Judæa: it was rendered to the ancient *Melek*, and rejected for Yahweh.

Manasseh's reign was long; not less long was the supremacy of polytheism: it lasted, too, under the son of Manasseh, Amon, who reigned only two years, and perished by a violent death. Following a system of relative compulsion, the *syncretism* of these kings was, it may be said, persecuting. The prophets had become too exacting and bold to keep silent: it is hardly surprising that their freedom of speech cost some of them their lives. Nevertheless history has not recorded the name of any such martyr; and the prophetic literature does not show a single fragment which can be attributed with certainty to that vexed period. It was, perhaps, during these times of humiliation that the servants of Yahweh grasped the necessity for a code which might

order the whole religious life of persons, localities, and of the nation itself. Thus might be explained the origin of Deuteronomy, and the great movement which caused its *invention*, in the days of Josiah.

§ 4

This book was found in the temple, as we know, by the priest Hilkiah, in 621; was presented to the king as the Law of Yahweh, which Moses had promulgated before his death, in the plains of Moab; was accepted by Josiah as a divine revelation, and used by him to carry out a more extensive and minute reform than any which had been ventured on before. Everything was foreseen; the execution was prompt; and it was indeed a new system which was inaugurated in place of the old. The story in Kings leaves not the smallest doubt as to this.*

It is certain that the matter of this Law was for the most part new to Josiah and his contemporaries. If the pious king had known the wishes of Yahweh earlier, he would have carried them out; he did not think he was offending Yahweh by not forbidding in the high places a worship that had been always practised, except perhaps during a few years in the reign of Hezekiah; by tolerating, more

* 2 Kings xxii. 2-13.

or less, the worship of strange gods, as almost all the kings had done since Solomon. If this existence of a Law of Moses were not unknown, if it were admitted that the priests were its holders and interpreters, then the whole bearing of that which Hilkiah said he had found had been ignored. Besides, though the Book of Kings speaks of a Law of Yahweh, it does not say that Law had been written by Moses; still less does it imply that the book *invented* by Hilkiah was the original manuscript of a Mosaic work, stored away for centuries and at last forgotten near the ark.

It has been guessed that Deuteronomy was written under Manasseh, forgotten in the temple, and found accidentally a few years later. This hypothesis is unlikely, because the roll could not have remained unnoticed in the shrine of Yahweh; and the text of *Kings* does not lead us to suppose that it was found in any out-building of the sacred edifice. If one wishes in this affair to distinguish between deceivers and deceived, it is a very small matter whether Hilkiah and Shaphan, the official of Josiah who brought the book to him, were the first dupes instead of being the first tricksters. Deuteronomy, either the first draft, or the fundamental document of the book which has come to us under that name, must

have been written to be deposited in the temple: its discovery cannot have been accidental. From a literary point of view, it was like a new edition of the old texts, especially of the *Book of the Covenant*, worked out with an eye to existing needs. The author, speaking in the name of Moses, wrote what Moses would have said, what he would not have failed to teach, in the present circumstances: he considered his work as an oracle of Yahweh, and undoubtedly he could not conceive of it otherwise. The readers for whom the book was intended would have been unable, too, to consider it good and true unless it had been presented to them in this way; it seemed also perfectly simple and guileless to refer it back to Yahweh, its principal author. In the very probable case that the editor plotted with Hilkiah to deposit the precious writing in the shrine, that which seems to us, and which would be for us, a trick might be done without the personages in question having the least consciousness of the fraud which they were committing against the people and the king. The divine threats, which made so great an impression upon the mind of Josiah, were similar to those which the prophets had been accustomed to make use of in the name of Yahweh.

The mode of promulgation is worth noticing. "The king sent, and they gathered unto him "all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And "the king went up to the house of Yahweh, "and all the men of Judah and all the in- "habitants of Jerusalem with him, and the "priests, and the prophets, and all the people, "both small and great: and he read in their "ears all the words of the book of the "covenant which was found in the house of "Yahweh. And the king stood by the pillar, "and made a covenant before Yahweh, to "walk after Yahweh, and to keep his com- "mandants and his testimonies, and his "statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul, "to confirm the words of this covenant, that "were written in this book: and all the "people stood to the covenant."* Nothing shows better the national character of Jahvism. Everything was done as at the accession of a king: he, on taking possession of the throne, published the charter of his reign, which his subjects, represented by the leaders of the people, swore to observe. Josiah announced the charter of Yahweh; then he swore, in his own name and in the name of his people, to be faithful to it, so that the whole nation was bound by an engagement with its God

* 2 Kings xxiii. 1–3.

to everything which it had pleased him to ordain.

There were precedents for this in the texts, if not in fact. The Jahvist decalogue and the old *Book of the Covenant* were described as agreements of this kind; we do not know whether they were ratified under the same conditions. The Book of Kings mentions a sworn agreement for extirpating the worship of Baal, at the accession of Josiah; but it would be rash to assimilate that proposal to either one or other of these instances. The most pertinent passage is, perhaps, that in which we see Joshua assembling the children of Israel at Shechem, before his death; and, after reminding them of Yahweh's favours, as well as of his requirements, putting before them the choice between this exacting God and the Gods which their fathers had worshipped "beyond the river," or the Gods of the Amorites, the ancient Gods of the country: and the people declares that it wishes to serve Yahweh, and is eager to reject the other Gods. Then Joshua made a covenant with the people, gave it laws and ordinances, and set up a pillar to be a witness of the agreement which had been undertaken.* Now that stone happened

* Joshua xxiv. The narrative belongs to the Elohistic source of the Hexateuch, but the editing is not perhaps much earlier than Deuteronomy.

to be under the sacred tree of Moreh, whose deity was most probably none other than El-Berith, "the God of the Covenant," the ancient deity of Shechem. It was, then, from the old sanctuary of Shechem, where Yahweh identified himself with "the God of the Covenant," that the notion of an alliance may have come, as well as some of the oldest texts in which the regulations imposed on Israel by Yahweh are summarized.* The solemn forms of agreement undertaken by Josiah and his people create somehow a perpetual and sacred obligation, and the violation of it enables all the national misfortunes to be explained as a just vengeance of heaven.

This Law of Yahweh was not a ritual, nor a volume of doctrine, but a complete manual of theocratic government. The will of the God regulated everything autocratically: religion, policy, morality, social and international relations. The supreme unity of the God of Israel, if not his absolute monotheism, was formulated in the clearest terms, and every practical consequence was deduced from it.

The centralization of public worship was established in principle, and at once, by the prohibition to sacrifice outside the temple of

* Several critics think the *Book of the Covenant* was formerly united to Joshua xxiv. in the Elohistic source.

Jerusalem, "the place which Yahweh has chosen to put his name there."* Formerly every domestic animal killed for ordinary use, or for family rejoicings, was a kind of sacrifice. As a proof, we may recall a well-known episode in the wars of Saul against the Philistines: † the people had taken many oxen and sheep in the enemy's camp, and, being famished after a long battle, they killed the beasts and eat them on the spot. Great was the emotion of Saul when he learned this profanation; he had a large stone brought, which became an altar, and on it was poured out the blood of all the animals to be eaten. According to Deuteronomy, as the killing for sacrifice might only be done henceforth in Jerusalem, it is allowed that domestic animals, oxen, sheep, goats, may be killed for ordinary use, but without any sacrifice, speaking strictly: care is taken, however, to point out that the animal must always be bled, and that the blood must be poured out with certain precautions, so that even in ordinary butchering there remained a notion of primitive sacrifice, and of the portion due to Yahweh. It was a suppression of sacrifices by family and clan; if private sacrifices were still allowed they could only take place in the national sanctuary, where they must be much less frequent, and where

* Deut. xii. 5. † 1 Sam. xiv. 32–5.

they were bound to lose a part of their primitive character.

The priesthood was organized strictly: all the Levites who ministered in shrines of Yahweh outside the capital were affiliated to the clergy of Jerusalem. The carrying out of this measure would not have been unattended with difficulty, if there had been time to apply it. After the exile, the priestly Levites of Deuteronomy, who had formed only one class, became both priests and Levites: the former being the descendants of Zadok, that is members of the family who were hereditary occupants of the Jerusalem priesthood, and the descendants of other sacerdotal families who were able to prove their right; and the latter, who became henceforth a subordinate class, to which lower ministrations were entrusted, were descended from families which had formerly served local sanctuaries, and which had resigned or been refused the sacerdotal rank.

From a moral stand-point, the Deuteronomistic legislation shows the progress made, by the influence of the prophets, in the ideal conception of society. Though religiously intolerant, as it was forced to be to attain its end, it nevertheless exhales an humanitarian spirit, a tenderness for the poor, a passion for justice. It was not in reality a political code, though

it affected every interest in the national life: it was, rather, a teaching for all religious consciences, from the sovereign downwards. One may, in short, estimate the progress made since the days of Elijah by the contents of the new decalogue, reproduced in Exodus, before the *Book of the Covenant*, and in Deuteronomy.* The two versions proceed from a single source, probably a little earlier than the reformation of Josiah, and which aimed at improving the old Jahvist decalogue, or rather at superseding it. The ten commandments must have been thus formulated originally:

I am Yahweh thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other God but me.
Thou shalt not make idols for thyself.
Thou shalt not utter vainly the name of Yahweh thy God.
Remember the seventh day, to sanctify it.
Honour thy father and thy mother.
Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not be a false witness against thy neighbour.
Thou shalt not covet anything of thy neighbour's.

The absolute prohibition of divine images shows a progress in the Jahvist reaction. The

* Exod. xx. 1–17; Deut. v. 6–21.

absence of any strictly ritual commands is another proof. The substitution of moral obligations for ritual practices is most significant. The majority of these regulations had been long accepted, at any rate as between members of the same clan and between Israelites. But the novelty consisted in generalizing their obligations, and in presenting them as the genuine service which Yahweh demanded. It is the application of the prophets' maxim: justice rather than sacrifice.

But, as a religion lives by ritual traditions and not only by moral precepts, the established worship had to be reckoned with. It had been maintained by so regulating it as to take away everything which was stultified by the ideal of the prophets. Deuteronomy was a law of priests drafted by prophetical inspiration. The reformation could not have succeeded without the help of the Jerusalem priests, and to them the centralization of worship could not be displeasing. In the compromise between ritual and spiritual religion, the priest was bound to gain more than the prophet; and it may even be said that the book itself which canonized the essential matters in the prophetic teaching was a preparation for the end of prophecy. As soon as the will of Yahweh was fixed in writing, there was no more need to evoke it

perpetually by inspired men: the book was always there. And Deuteronomy, which recognised the prophets as channels of Yahweh, placed them under a rule which could not but impede their action: the prophet, whose prediction did not come to pass, must die. We may believe, however, that no prophet was executed for this crime. What killed the institution was that the *Torah* of Yahweh, which the prophets had almost taken away from the priests, was submitted again to the latter by this book; until by the doctors of the book it was taken away finally from the priests.

According to the Book of Kings, Josiah not only reformed the popular religion, abolished the *tophet* in the vale of Hinnom, and destroyed all places of worship outside Jerusalem, but he went and profaned the holy place of Bethel, in the ancient territory of the northern kingdom. He even took measures to eradicate all idolatry from private worship. Thus he removed the *teraphim*, a species of domestic idol, of which the usage had hitherto been common, and uncensured as it would seem by the prophets. The *teraphim* were probably a relic of spirit-worship: they were the kindly *genii* of a house; but there is no proof that they were ancestral spirits. Their images must have

been fairly big, since Michal, to conceal the flight of David from the messengers of Saul, had put the household *teraphim* into her husband's bed. Hosea speaks of *teraphim* as common objects of worship. In the sanctuaries, the *teraphim* went usually with the *ephod*, the oracular image or instrument of Yahweh. Deuteronomy does not mention the *teraphim* specially; but it is natural that they should have been included in the general condemnation of divine images. We can see by this instance that ancient Jahvism was deeply tinged with beliefs and practices analogous to those of the pagan religions, and which came from the same source, namely spirit-worship. Its purification could not have happened in a day.

The reformation of Josiah had no immediate success, because it did not alter the spirit of the nation, and it did not last long. The pious king was able to remove the public monuments of alien worships, the altars and the idols. He was able to interfere, more or less completely, with the traditional sacrifices on the high places. He could even celebrate the feasts in honour of Yahweh as they had never been witnessed before; so that all the children of Judah seemed to come together, and to be occupied wholly with their God, without any idolatry or debauch sullying their homage. But, though a

certain external order had been established, minds were not regenerated. The mass of the population, which was idolatrous under Manasseh and Amon, had not been taken with a sudden fervour of monotheism because a book of the Law had been found in the temple; because Josiah had chosen, conformably to that book and to the exhortations of the prophets, to honour Yahweh in such or such a manner, and to the exclusion of any other God. It is probable that the people at first, like the king himself, had been frightened by the threats contained in the book, and which had been brought home to them by current politics: they may have believed, too, that they had recovered their ancestral religion, and that they would earn the favour of Yahweh by carrying it out. But these impressions were not lasting. The idolatrous spirit was repressed for only a few years, and it continued to indulge itself by private superstitions. The true worship of Yahweh, the love of his glory and of justice, which Deuteronomy aimed at implanting, flourished only in a weak minority. Then there came the catastrophe of Megiddo, which seemed to ruin for ever the experiment of Josiah. The religious establishment which he had tried to found could only be solidified by time, by sustained effort, and by the help of favouring

circumstances. The sad end of the pious king who, strong in his faithfulness to his God, was driven audaciously to meet the Egyptian army, and who fell a victim to his confidence, through unwillingness to treat with foreigners, seemed to be the condemnation of his work. Jeremiah himself, who loved him, seldom recalls his memory; because this model of princes had become through his death an argument against God. There was no return, however, to the idolatrous excesses of Manasseh's reign: the worship of the temple remained pure; but every one recovered his liberty, and foreign worships had a renewed freedom of action. There was not, therefore, less confidence in Yahweh, and the indestructibility of the temple was believed in. That is why they ventured twice to oppose Nebuchadnezzar, though relying too upon Egypt.

Deuteronomy and Josiah had travailled only for the future: the volume, in fact, remained, with a remembrance of the experience gained by it; and it never had to be found again, because it was never suffered to be lost. The faithful servitors of Yahweh knew whence they could draw upon the Law of their God: they knew, too, that that Law had been actually practised; and they were able to discern what was still wanting for the perfect regulation of

Israel's life as the people of God. The point had been gained that the religion of Israel was founded upon a revelation unique in history; that Israel was, by election of the true God, a people promoted above all others; that even its past was unique by reason of the wonders which Yahweh had wrought for its necessities, and in its favour. By managing to place the Jews outside the ordinary ways followed by nations destined to survive, Deuteronomy founded Judaism; because it prepared the organization of a religious community whose existence did not depend on the life of a Judæan state.

§ 5

If the religious history of Israel, in the years which immediately preceded the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, is not comprised entirely in the life and activity of Jeremiah, at any rate the fortunes and the writings of that prophet give us the truest notion of it. Jeremiah, even before the death of Josiah, did not believe in the conversion of the people. He did not cease to foretell the ruin of the nation, even at the risk of drawing upon himself the vengeance of the sovereigns and the hatred of the mob. He was frankly unpopular, as Isaiah never was, and he said everything to make him

so. No one understood him. Jehoiakin loathed him. Zedekiah venerated him, so far as he did not fear him; but he did not venture to protect him openly against his enemies. It was all because Jeremiah foresaw a terrible affliction, even for the small number of righteous persons, and a ruin without measure for the majority, which were superstitious and gross, blind and selfish. He mocked at the prophets of good fortune, who flattered the people; and he maintained that sinister forebodings were the only true ones, that one cannot be a messenger of Yahweh by saying that Judah will not be destroyed.

As these miserable auguries afflicted him who drew them, so he suffered deeply from the opposition which he encountered; and as he could only encourage himself by the sense of duty, he must have seen and felt the incorrigible obstinacy of those whom he was trying to snatch from the divine judgment. He was convinced that a long trial was necessary to purify men's minds. He affirmed that scarcely any one, except himself, understood the inevitable and salutary nature of the trial. He saw coming the ruin of his nation; and was so convinced that he seemed to desire it. The captives of Babylon seemed to him in a better way than the Jews left in Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar,

and it was in fact that band of exiles which saved the religion of the prophets. He did not see the restoration of religion; and the Jews who took him into Egypt were by no means obedient to his words. Whatever his actual end, he was the martyr of his destiny; because he strove all his life for a cause that perished, so to speak, in his hands; and if he never ceased to believe in the triumph of God, he only experienced for himself the bitterness of defeat.

His attitude to the reformation of Josiah is obscure in the history. He seems to have had little or no part in it, to have expected nothing from it, to have been dissatisfied by it. Interpreters are not agreed about the meaning which should be given to a passage in his prophecies, when he says:

"Even the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times,
And the turtle, and the swallow and the crane observe the times of their coming;
But my people know not the ordinance of Yahweh.
How can you say We are wise,
And the law of Yahweh is with us?
But, behold, the false pen of the scribes
Hath wrought falsely."*

Certainly this is little flattering, on any hypo-

* Jer. viii. 7–8.

thesis, to the written Law. The prophecy may have been uttered before the publication of Deuteronomy; but it was not recorded, probably, until long after, and the language of the prophet is very difficult to explain, if he recognised any writing whatever as the Law of Yahweh. Many have refused to think that he could treat as a fraud the publication of the book found by Hilkiah. But it is not precisely the literary forgery, nor the artifice of its discovery, which he thus appreciates: it is the actual matter of all the received texts, which seems to him either to correspond imperfectly with the will of Yahweh, or to order things contrary to it. Jeremiah appears to be acquainted with no other Law than the teaching of the prophets. He judges the *Torah* of the priests severely, and Deuteronomy may have been for him, as it is really in many ways, a priestly law. The man who could make Yahweh say, "I spake not "unto your fathers, nor commanded them in "the day that I brought them out of the land "of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sac-"rifices: but this thing I commanded them "saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will "be your God, and ye shall be my people,"* may well have disapproved a regulation of

* Jer. vii. 22–3.

worship which was alleged to have been promulgated in the land of Moab. Even the centralization of worship at Jerusalem would not appeal much to the prophet who never ceased to announce the approaching ruin of the town and temple. The *nabis* who helped the reformation were those rather who, like Isaiah, believed the inviolability of Zion. They were the nationalist and optimistic prophets, whom Jeremiah treated as false prophets, although they might be as sincere as himself in their convictions.

As a matter of fact, to secure the future of Jahvism, it was not enough to criticise existing abuses according to the standard of a pure religion. Religions, in history, are not theories, nor sentiment, nor mystical aspirations, but the traditions of social life guaranteed by the consecration of a ritual. A spirit animates such institutions; but the institutions give consistency to the spirit, and keep it in touch with life. It has been said often that the religion of the prophets was materialized, narrowed, and lowered by the Law. Properly speaking, a religion of the prophets has never existed; any more than a religion of Jesus has existed; but there was a large and strenuous effort to raise the worship of Israel towards an ever-growing perfection in all that concerns

religious belief, the moral sense, and social justice. So far as that effort tended to disengage itself from institutions, and to recognise no law but personal inspiration, it was lost, and could only lose itself in the void. In so far as it was embodied in an institution, it lived and worked. Jeremiah represented the pure spirit of prophetic Jahvism. It was the written Law, that he despised, which saved out of his generous dreams all that was able to be utilised by the future time.

JUDAISM

CHAPTER V

JUDAISM

THE opportunity never came of practising the law of Deuteronomy in its early freshness. The agony of the Judæan kingdom began with the death of Josiah (610). Jerusalem fell in 586. The temple was destroyed, and Yahweh had no longer an earthly habitation. The nation itself vanished for a time, and, in a sense, for ever; because Judaism was thenceforward not a nation but a religion. The best elements in the population had been transported to Chaldæa, and those chosen few were tempered by adversity; for they rallied to Yahweh and his ministers, the priests and prophets: their religion was all that remained to them of the past, all in it that had a future. The morally weak and the superstitious melted away into the pagan populations. As those who had been carried away from Samaria were assimilated by the populations among whom the kings of

Assyria had settled them, so the Judæans whose religious faith was not strong and pure ceased quickly to be Jahvists. But there remained a faithful band in whom the spirit of the prophets and the Law survived. It lived on memory and hope. The book of Ezekiel and the second part of Isaiah (xl.–lv.) show us what were then the thoughts and aspirations of pious Israelites. They waited for the restoration, and prepared for it. When it was carried out, it followed a plan arranged, so to say, beforehand; and which was influenced by other considerations than the actual position created for the remnant of Judah by the political situation of the time.

1

From the point of view of antiquity nothing could be more abnormal than the religious position of the believing exiles who were the guardians of Jahvism. The principles and teaching of the prophets did not allow them to serve the Gods of Chaldæa: on the other hand, Judæan tradition, strengthened yet more by the Deuteronomic reformation, fixed Yahweh in Zion. It was impossible to organize in Babylon a system of worship whose only lawful seat must be at Jerusalem. Thus they clung all the more strictly to those religious practices

which could survive on a foreign soil: it was now that the sabbath and circumcision acquired their supreme importance as characteristic Jewish practices.

They were convinced, by the exhortations of the prophets, and by Deuteronomy, that the misfortunes of the nation had been caused because its worship was not blameless; and they believed, always according to the prophets, that the religion of their ancestors had been little better than infidelity from the beginning. Thus they were brought to imagine for the future Israel a pure religion that would guard its professors against a repetition of the divine chastisement. It is so that we must explain the making of rituals, which could have no immediate usage, but which would be utilised by the re-established worship. Up to now oral traditions and practice had been sufficient; but, now the temple worship had ceased, the new ritual could only exist in writing. Therefore they set to work and codified the ancient practices, making them agree with the prophetic standards; for now it was above all things necessary to conciliate the requirements of this moral religion with the traditional and popular practices of worship. Priests were better qualified for this task than any one else: that is why the achievement of this age is

personified best in Ezekiel, who was a priest, a prophet, and one may say an editor of Law.

As a prophet, Ezekiel still taught; but his literary activity was greater than his preaching. He is, so far as we know, the first of the student or bookish prophets who wrote apocalyptic visions. The priest in him is revealed because the prophet is a ritualist, which Jeremiah was not at all, though of sacerdotal origin*; neither was Isaiah, nor Amos, nor Hosea. It required a priest to conceive the messianic reign in the model of a precise liturgy, subordinated narrowly to the ritual of the temple. As a moralist, Ezekiel enforced vigorously the doctrine of individual responsibility, which scarcely agrees with older notions about the chastisement of Israel as a people, and for the sins of its fathers. He conceived the relation of Israel with Yahweh as a covenant, made in the desert, for a ritualistic purpose, and especially for the observance of the sabbath, which seemed to him the essential mark of Jahvism; and it is with respect to those old laws that he speaks of the malicious commandments which were given by Yahweh to Israel for its destruction.† Differ-

* But Jeremiah did not belong to the Jerusalem priesthood. Perhaps this fact should be weighed when we try to explain his complete indifference about the temple.

† See above, p. 165.

ing, thus, from Jeremiah, he acknowledged the *Book of the Covenant* and Deuteronomy as Mosaic laws. The great sin of Israel was idolatry: therefore the Israel of the future will be distinguished by a worship that conforms to the laws established by Yahweh himself. A more complete repudiation of the past could not be imagined. This prophet, above all others, has taught Judaism to misunderstand its own history.*

The life of Israel has been a continual idolatry; Ezekiel calls it prostitution, and he develops the symbolism, utilized by Hosea, of Yahweh's marriage with his people, by following it out in realistic descriptions that go very near to obscenity. Instead of a patriarchal nobility, he gives to his nation as ancestors an Amorite father and a Hittite mother. Jerusalem, Samaria, Sodom: it is all the same thing.

The God of Ezekiel is more anthropomorphic, one might say freely more archaic, than the God of Jeremiah. The prophet saw him in human shape, driving in a fantastic carriage. But this God has lost all connexion with Sinai. The "glory of Yahweh" comes from the north, from the hill of the Gods, which Ezekiel seems to identify with the Garden of Eden. A habitation had to be found for Yahweh, since he had left

* Stade, 84.

Zion; and he had become too great to be sent back into the wilderness. Though Ezekiel abhorred strange worships his imagination was filled with mythological subjects. The usage of pagan myths in apocalyptic writings begins with him. He seems to have made the Gods into auxiliaries of Yahweh; the seven celestial beings who carried out the destruction of Jerusalem* might be the Gods of the seven planets, and the one with an inkhorn would be Nabu. Was the mind of the Jahvist priest fertilized in Babylon by these materials borrowed from polytheism? It may be admitted freely. But would it not be more likely that in the reign of Manasseh, there would be formed in the temple at Jerusalem a kind of gnostic *syncretism*, which the Deuteronomic reformation did not attack, or which was only pruned and not eradicated? The Jahvist story of the flood, which is not very old, might come from this period.

By the anonymous author, who is usually known as the Second Isaiah, the purely ideal treatment of Jeremiah is revived; but the decadence of prophecy is shown by the author not making himself known. His work is no longer an exhortation, nor even an original prophecy. It consists of eloquent displays about the approaching deliverance of

* Ezek. ix.

Israel; and, however remarkable it may be, in the sentiment which inspires it and by its musical style, it depends very much for its matter on the prophetic writers of the past. The author never says anything by his own inspiration, though he speaks often in the name of Yahweh. He is a prophet, since he announces and interprets the plans of God, but he is very little of a visionary. Instead of being, like Ezekiel, a man of the future Law, he is merely a man of hope; and he draws freely on every subject that can stimulate and nourish confidence.

In him, at length, we find the expression of an absolute monotheism: Yahweh alone has made the world, and directs history; he only is God, and the strange Gods, whom the author identifies with their images, are a mere nothing. This latter notion did not prevail, at least not wholly, over that of Ezekiel. The Gods survived in the condition of spirits subordinated to the sole God. It was allowed that—

> When the Most High formed the nations,
> When he separated the children of men,
> He settled the borders of the peoples
> According to the numbers of the sons of God;
> For the portion of Yahweh was Jacob,
> And his inheritance was Israel.*

* Deut. xxxii. 8–9, following the Septuagint.

Then two notions mingled; and it was held that the Gods of the nations did not really exist, but that they were spirits whom God had entrusted with the care of the peoples, or who had taken it upon themselves; and that they had performed their duties badly.

While insisting upon the creation of the world by Yahweh, the Second Isaiah had no philosophic theory of creation, that is of a world drawn out of nothing. Yahweh organized chaos, and even triumphed over it. Though his mind was not tinged with mythology like Ezekiel's, the anonymous writer acknowledges a struggle of Yahweh against the power of darkness, whom the Demiurge had to overcome before he could organize the existing world.

> Awake, awake, put on strength
> O arm of Yahweh;
> Awake as in the days of old,
> The generations of ancient times!
> Is it not thou who hast split Rahab
> And pierced the dragon?*

Rahab is the redoubtable Tiamut, whom the Babylonian Demiurge, Marduk, cut in two, to make heaven and earth. This myth may

* Isa. li. 9–10.

have been known to the Jews before the captivity. Traces of it have been found in Job, and in several psalms. The priestly writer of the Hexateuch has chosen to ignore it in his systematic narrative of the cosmogony; although neither has he any notion of a creation, and he also confronts the Demiurge with a chaos, which has to be organized,

In the same way that the Second Isaiah has reached the notion of a sole and universal God, so he has formed a larger conception of Israel's office than any of his predecessors. Israel was chosen to proclaim the true God to the nations: he has foundered in this task, but he will rise again, and his restoration will be the saving of the Gentiles. It was a large and gracious vision, and it is the nearest approach to universalism that is found in the prophets; by the width of its horizon it exceeds the Gospel of Jesus; and Saint Paul himself, under the pressure of circumstances, has rather narrowed it. That the author is later than Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and is an imitation of them, can hardly be doubted. For him there are two Israels: a real and historic Israel of the past, a guilty Israel, too, alas! which has not fulfilled its mission, and which Yahweh has punished justly; and an ideal Israel, faithful

and perfect, represented formerly without any doubt by the righteous and the prophets, which has suffered in their persons all the tribulations that have afflicted the chosen people, but to which above all the future belongs, since it will emerge from death to enlighten the nations :

It is too small a thing to establish the tribes of Jacob
And to bring back the survivors of Israel :
I make thee the light of the Gentiles,
So that my salvation may go to the ends of the earth.*

Ezekiel segregated Israel from the Gentiles in his city of the future, and the Lord divided him from them in the actual world. The Second Isaiah amalgamates pagans and Israelites, and even foresees, a little rashly, the conversion of Cyrus. A privilege, however, is reserved to the people of God : it will reign over the converted Gentiles.

The reality cannot fail to be short of so fine a dream ; but, possibly, not a less ardent hope was required to bring about a new and voluntary migration of these exiles who had taken root in the land of their enemies, and who in the end had done so well there. When Cyrus granted them leave to go back into their own country, they did not all avail themselves of it; and many Jews, who

* Isa. xlix. 6.

remained faithful to Yahweh and in communion with their brethren in Palestine, continued to live by the waters of Babylon. The fortunes of Judaism were long precarious in Jerusalem; and the Babylonian colony supported it by encouragement, by its faith, by its favour with the rulers, and also with its money. The exiles who returned, under Zerubbabel, to settle in Jerusalem and to rebuild the town, and then the temple, were few in number, and they were soon isolated in the midst of a population which had not learnt the lesson of the captivity. The smaller peasantry, which had remained in the land, had not forgotten Yahweh, but its religion was that of the time before the exile; and it had neither the zeal nor the legalist temper of the Jews who came from Babylon. Thanks to the help which came thence, the Jerusalem settlement was by degrees consolidated; and when its pious fervour grew timid or seemed to wane the exiled believers provided for its needs. From the exile there was imported by Ezra, and under the auspices of Nehemiah, that Law which finally moulded Judaism.

§ 2

If the last chapters of Ezekiel, (xl.–xlviii.) in which the *status* of the future Israel is

planned, had not been attached to the writings of a known prophet, and if their author had not covered them with the name of Moses, by presenting them as a revelation made to Israel in the wilderness, they might have figured in the Law. Other heirs of the sacerdotal tradition, working in the same spirit, elaborated a ritual which has been incorporated in that document of the Hexateuch which is known as the Priestly Code. This document has been styled by writers *The Law of Holiness*,* because of the theory which dominates it: to make Israel a holy people and worthy of the God whom it serves, by the practice of a worship regulated down to its minutest details. The sacerdotal point of view is betrayed by this anxiety; for the holiness does not consist solely in moral perfection, but also, and it might even be said chiefly, in a ritual purity which depends on primitive notions about the purity and impurity of things, whose relation to the deity is conceived in a wholly material way. Ancient superstitions, otherwise harmless in themselves, thus take on the appearance of divine prohibitions: as for instance the forbidding to sow two kinds of grain in the same field, or to use two different kinds of material in the weaving of a cloth; or, it may be, that common

* See above, p. 31.

pagan habits are forbidden, like tattooing, which primitive Jahvism seems to have practised.*

All this is mingled with commands or prohibitions of a moral nature, which are strictly religious. And they are all justified for similar reasons: "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I Yahweh am holy, and have separated you from the nations, that ye should be mine."† This separation itself is an element of the holiness which is prescribed.

The same point of view prevails throughout the whole Priestly Code. The compilation gives its rules in the setting of a narrative which makes the whole work a sort of liturgical history of mankind: an history, it must be said emphatically, which has little or no connexion with realities. But the author gains an advantage by linking the origin of the sabbath with the creation of the world, the prohibition of blood with the deluge, circumcision with Abraham; as he also gains one, more obviously, by attaching the ritual of the second temple to Moses and the revelation at Sinai. For he does not fear to throw back the system of sacrifices into the times of Moses, at the cost

* Exod. xiii. 9, 16, alludes to it. Apparently the old prophets were marked on their foreheads; see 1 Kings xx. 41. Tattooing the hand is alluded to in Isa. xliv. 5.

† Lev. xx. 26.

of suppressing in the patriarchal history everything contradictory to his systematic theory. Through the Priestly Code, the same temper of idealism and ritualism has affected the final composition of the Law and of the whole Pentateuch.

It may be seen, from the Book of Nehemiah, that the promulgation of the Law by Ezra was made under similar conditions to the promulgation of Deuteronomy by Josiah; and that the priestly legislation, as a whole, was not known previously by the community which bound itself so solemnly to observe it. As Josiah had rent his clothes, in sign of poignant grief, when he had heard the reading of Deuteronomy, overwhelmed as he was by the wrath of Yahweh for the neglect of this Law by the former generations, who had been ignorant of it, so the people assembled by Ezra was dissolved in tears when it acquired a knowledge of the new code. And as Josiah and the people had sworn to observe the Law of Hilkiah, so Nehemiah and the assembled Jews swore to keep the Law of Ezra. This time the undertaking was even put down in writing: Nehemiah signed it, so did the priests and nobles; and the multitude followed their leaders, promising "with curse and oath to walk in Yahweh's Law, which had been

given by Moses the servant of Yahweh." * Finally, in the same way as the author of Kings observed, with profound truth, that never since the time of the Judges (nor even before it), had a Passover been celebrated like that held by Josiah in the eighteenth year of his reign, so the Book of Chronicles points out, rightly, that neither since the time of Joshua (nor in any other time), had the children of Israel kept the Feast of Tabernacles as they did after the promulgation of Ezra's Law.†

The practical conditions by means of which Israel shall be truly Yahweh's nation, the priestly nation which it ought to be for the God who, by a special choice, has separated it from all the peoples, are laid down with the utmost detail in the Levitical code. The land occupied by the children of Jacob is holy, as the property of God ; but even more holy is the tabernacle, that is the temple, the only place in the world where the divine worship may be celebrated, and where Yahweh becomes present to receive the offerings due to him. Holy are the seasons which God sets apart as belonging specially to himself, and in particular his sabbaths. But the sabbatical system grew to extravagant proportions : the earth itself

* Neh. x. 29.

† See 2 Kings xxiii. 22. ; Neh. viii. 17.

must have its sabbath, and rest untilled every seventh year; and at the end of seven sabbatory cycles, there must be a great sabbath, the year of Jubilee; also a rest for the soil, and a season when alienated estates must go back to their original owners. This curious social economy was meant to prove the sovereign rights of Yahweh, the only real proprietor of Israel's land. A whole system of dues was organized to acknowledge this right: first-fruits, tithes, and a regulated series of offerings in the temple. Holy must be all the children of Israel by the rigorous observance of circumcision, and of all the commandments about clean and unclean things, about states of purity and impurity. They were truly a nation of priests, and they proclaimed it. But as all could not carry out the special conditions of purity which were necessary for the divine service, the people were represented, in matters of worship, by the priests, who were held to be descended from Aaron by his two sons Eleazar and Ithamar; and by the Levites in the lesser ministries of God's house, and as attendants on the priests.

The latter had a chief, a high priest, the supposed successor of Aaron, who became the leading personage in the new community. Before Josiah's reformation, the sacerdotal body had no single head, though the first

priest of the temple was already a great person; but he was dependent on the king, and the priests of the shrines outside Jerusalem were not subject to him. Under the conditions which were prepared for Judaism in the restoration authorized by Cyrus, the chief of the Jerusalem priesthood, in all that was not reserved to the foreign sovereignty, was the real leader of the Jews: the sacerdotal code definitely consecrates his supreme authority, and his special dignity in religious matters. His power was bound to grow, and practically did grow, little by little. At the return from exile, there was a kind of rivalry between Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua, and also occasional bickerings between Nehemiah and the high priest Eliashib. But when he only had to deal with Persian viceroys, the pontiff, who had enormous revenues, was the real master of the little Jewish state. Even more, when the family of Mattathias had regained temporarily the national independence, the political chief, profiting by the fact that he was of a sacerdotal family, assumed the dignity of high priest. Herod, who could not pretend to it, was careful to keep the choice of pontiffs in his own hands, and not to leave the office too long with the same person. The Romans did the same.

But the religious importance of this pontificate was not equal to its political greatness. This had not been foreseen by the theorists of the Levitical code, who were chiefly preoccupied with the centralization of worship, with the unity of the sanctuary and of the sacerdotal hierarchy. The regulation of the priesthood was a part of the system which organized the life of the community theocratically, it might even be said ritualistically. That system is now perfected: it is composed almost wholly of ancient materials, but it is new by the spirit which animates it all, and gives a meaning to every part.

On one hand, it would seem that the overthrow of the first temple and the temporary suppression of sacrifice effected a purifying and spiritualizing of the conceptions of Yahweh. Yahweh is no longer, and above all things, the God of Israel; he is God, simply: he is no longer represented as talking familiarly with men, and the priestly writer is careful to suppress the infantile story of Eden, as well as most things in the patriarchal legends; storms are still instruments of divine manifestation, but because God wills it so, not by any natural affinity; God withdraws himself from the world, and from external intercourse with men, to communicate only with

their spirit, perhaps more with their spirit than their heart. To this tendency, which is slightly intellectualist, we owe the fine story of the creation which now opens the Bible, as well as the philosophy of the old sacred history, and the notion of successive agreements with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Nothing could be less true as history; but it was a striking production of rationalizing theology. It was all reasoned until it seemed to be most reasonable. On this foundation, Jewish and Christian monotheism has built a general philosophy of the universe and of history which was able to impose itself on the ancient world, and which has been seriously challenged only by the scientific labours of recent centuries.

On the other hand, one seems to watch a materializing of worship that contrasts strangely with the spiritualization of belief. Nevertheless Ezra's Law did not materialize the worship except in relation to us, so to speak, and not in comparison with what had existed previously. This Law did not materialize worship so far as we compare it with the actual religion of the prophets, remembering that there never was any prophetical religion, but only a criticism by the prophets of a worship thoroughly engrained with idolatry and superstition: it is this worship

that we must compare with the worship of the Levitical code if we would appraise the latter justly. At that time, and in those surroundings, it could not have entered the mind of any religious legislator that the system of sacrifices should be abolished. The sacerdotal code appears to recommend a more external and ritualistic religion than Deuteronomy, because the introduction of many customs and observances into its rules was thought desirable, and especially all the details of the liturgical service: of these things, the authors of Deuteronomy had not thought it advisable to speak, though they existed none the less, and they were bound to attract the legists of the exile. The rules about things clean and unclean, and the whole of the sacrificial liturgy, are only the codification and systematizing of a very ancient usage. Everything that clashed with the monotheistic faith was eliminated, as well as practices obviously tainted with idolatry and superstition, or which were connected with divination and worship of the dead. Of all the rest, out of everything which could be regarded as an element of worship, was made a cycle of observances, minutely thought out, in which was perceived a way of recognising the sovereignty of God by a service of perpetual obedience. And it never happened that for the

majority, or even for the doctors of the Law, these practices were considered indifferent in themselves and without intrinsic value. Nor did their course of development stop even here. The legislation of Ezra shows the beginning of a casuistry, whose excessive development will one day be hurtful to the morality of true religion. For the present, it is a way of cataloguing the heritage of the past, while neutralising the primitive and more or less naturalistic meaning of the ancient rites.

In its own time, the sacerdotal code, far from being reactionary, was rather a stage of progress in the evolution of Judaism. It facilitated the compromise, which was begun by Deuteronomy, between the faith of the prophets, with its idealizing and individualistic tendencies, and the necessities of a popular religion; it might be added, of every religion which involves the communion of its believers by means of a settled and traditional worship. It gave to monotheism, which was defined henceforward as a creed, that external protection which was needed to implant it firmly in the conscience of the Jewish people. In order that the monotheist faith might become indestructible for Israel, it was necessary that the chosen people should be segregated, as it were, and shielded from pagan influences, by

submitting to a severe and complicated rule. "Religions," says Renan, "often gain a conservative power from the very fetters which they impose."* Less shut in by the Law, the Jewish community would have been more liable to temptations from without, and might easily have been diverted from its contribution to the religious history of mankind. It is true that this crushing law could only be made efficacious by being accepted; but it always had zealous partizans to ensure its triumph, even by force if necessary, should its authority seem threatened.

There was one practice, namely, fasting, which is hardly mentioned in the Law, since it is inculcated only for the solemnity of the Expiation,† on the tenth day of the seventh month, but which acquired nevertheless a prominent place among the religious customs of the Jews after the exile. It seems that they used to commemorate in this way, during the captivity, their melancholy anniversaries. Before that, fasts had only been ordered for public calamities; but fasting was a usual custom in the burial rites, and perhaps in its origin it was connected with worship of the dead. In public fasts the same ceremonial

* *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*, ii. 465.

† Neh. ix. 1.

was observed as for mourning. For instance, on the occasion of promulgating Ezra's Law, "The children of Israel were assembled with "fasting, and with sack cloth, and with earth upon them." At that period every important matter was prepared for by fasting. It was an exhibition of repentance, to which was added a public acknowledgment of national sin, and it soon grew into a fashionable habit of private devotion. The misfortunes of the nation and the spirit of post-exilic Judaism are undoubtedly enough to explain the diffusion of the practice.

§ 3

After the reformation of Ezra and Nehemiah, Judaism was settled, and it tended progressively to harden. Up till then, it had been on the defensive against the petty nations round it, and against the inhabitants of the former kingdom of Samaria: the material interests of the community in Jerusalem led them to open their gates to their neighbours, and to be on friendly relations with them. These necessities were a counterpoise to the exacting and exclusive religious feeling which the old exiles had brought back from Babylon. It can be seen clearly that the priests of the temple had scarcely reached a position of privilege and profit before they showed themselves less

fanatical and narrow than the legists who came from Babylon, like the scribe Ezra, or than the pious laity, who also came from abroad, like Nehemiah.

On the question of marriage, especially, with non-Jewish women, the priests and inhabitants of Jerusalem had not the scrupulosity of the reformers. The Book of Ruth would seem to have been written against the measures that zealots for the holiness of Israel wanted to enforce. As primitive Jahvism was above all things a religion of men, which troubled as little about women as about slaves, marriages with non-Israelite women had long been permitted without scruple. But such marriages had become irreconcilable with the notions that had been formed about the holiness of Israel, and about the entire repudiation of all foreign worship. Polygamy remained licit in theory, but was little practised; divorce was wholly at the will of the husband; but the blood of the chosen race must remain pure, and neither superstition nor idolatry should invade the home. A struggle was bound to come between the party of freedom and the zealots of the Law.

The Samaritan schism owed its beginning to these differences. We have seen already that the majority of the antique Israelites and

Judæans, who had remained in their country, were really desirous to worship Yahweh, but they had neither the bitter zeal nor the exclusive temper which animated the exiles, those especially who did not come back, and who from Babylon watched over the fortunes of Jahvism in their native land. The old inhabitants would willingly have united themselves to the worship of Jerusalem, but they were excluded. They were not organized, however, into a rival community, as they had probably neither priests nor Law. Now it so happened that the grandson of the high priest Eliashib had married the daughter of Sanballat, the opponent of Nehemiah. When there was a question of putting away the foreign wives, which was a fundamental matter in the reformation planned by Ezra and carried out by Nehemiah, the grandson of Eliashib preferred exiling himself to dismissing his wife and breaking with his father-in-law. And he was probably not alone; because Nehemiah writes in his history,* when he boasts of having expelled him, "Remember them, O my God, "because they have defiled the priesthood, and "the covenant of the priesthood, and of the "Levites." The banished priests retired to Samaria; and thus the sect known as the

* Neh. xii. 29.

Samaritans was organized, whose sanctuary was at Shechem, on mount Gerizim, one of the holy places of the old kingdom of Israel.

The rupture could not have been at first so complete as it grew to be in the course of time. We may hold that the Judæans of Samaria kept up some intercourse and connexion with their native country. The schismatic priests accepted the Law, as it had been made by Ezra, and after him by the scribes who edited the compilations of the Pentateuch. But the establishment of a rival worship so near Jerusalem could not be effected without hostility, which soon broke out. The Samaritans accepted only the Law, and not the collection of the Prophets, which was made about a century later: nor, with better reason, that of the *Hagiographa*. Their worship was always a strict monotheism, according to the tenour of the Law; but it was a religion without enthusiasm, and therefore it never showed any capacity for proselytizing. It may be noticed that the Sadducees, the sacerdotal aristocracy of Jerusalem, undertook also to base their religion solely upon the Law, and that they were wanting altogether in religious zeal. This parallel is not without historical significance. Samaritanism was the antithesis of a proselytizing organization: it was an association of reason-

able believers protesting against what seemed to them an intolerant fanaticism. Great religious creations do not issue out of such conditions. The Samaritan body was nothing but a Judaic sect, which in no sense continued the traditions of the old Israelitish monarchy. That sect broke away from Judaism at the very time when the latter was becoming self-concentrated and vigorous, and was about to exert the force of its propaganda on the world.

At Jerusalem prophecy was extinguished. At the beginning of the restoration, while the temple was rebuilding, a few authoritative voices were heard, those of Haggai and Zechariah. By the time of Nehemiah, the institution was dead. Nehemiah, to be accurate, still mentions prophets; but, according to him, they were people paid by his opponents to frighten him with untrue announcements. "Remember, O my God," writes the pious governor, "Tobiah and Sanballat, according to "these their works, and also the prophetess "Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets that "would have put me in fear." * Henceforth, prophecy was only carried on by stealth, in the pseudonymous literature of the apocalypses. There is no longer any prophetical teaching. Sacerdotal instruction vanished, too, in like

* Neh. vi. 14.

manner. The ministerial duties of the priest consisted only in performing a very complicated ritual. The future belonged to scribes, doctors of the Law, moralists, casuists. The scribe outlived, not only the prophet, but the priest; and it was by him, with his intangible Law, that Judaism itself was able to survive. About the year 200, when Ecclesiasticus was written, he was already in great repute. He was the sage, the master, credited with a knowledge of things divine and human. All this knowledge, however, was co-ordinated with and subordinated to a proficiency in the Law of God: in time, it was not thought well to have any other knowledge. The scribal institution was definitely established in the time of Herod the Great, when Hillel and Shammai, the famous heads of the two schools, were flourishing. They were then, and they tended to become more and more, the spiritual guides of the Jews.

Ezra's Law made Judaism; but we must not believe that it succeeded in eliminating all those elements of the older religion which it had proscribed or dropped. In the same way that the old patriarchal legends survived in the form given to the Pentateuch by the sacerdotal code, so many primitive beliefs were fitted on to the transcendental God. That God was self-sufficing: he created the world by

his word, and was its sole governor. His word was still in his Law for the guidance of his people; and there was no more necessity for prophetical visions, or revealing dreams, any more than for angels round about him. The apocalyptic literature was produced, none the less; and round its unique deity it organized a whole celestial court.

In the primitive Jahvism, and still more in that of the prophets, the spirit of Yahweh tended to replace the spirits; and when the angel of Yahweh was mentioned, his personal manifestation was meant, rather than the apparition of a being distinct from him. Heaven and earth formed a single world, in which heaven was less important than earth; because Yahweh lived and acted more commonly on earth than in heaven. But now the God was raised altogether above nature; and they soon dared not even pronounce his name of Yahweh, either through a slightly superstitious fear of a word connected with so great a majesty, or through some confused notion that a proper name was wholly unbecoming in the sole and only God. Heaven became a world distinct from earth: it was the divine world, where the Eternal reigns in glory, and which is in opposition to the human world, where God's will suffers contradiction

until it pleases him to enforce it on earth as in heaven.

And the divine world is not filled by God alone. The sons of God had functions that were but ill-defined alongside of the old Yahweh: they seem to have belonged chiefly to an old popular mythology, which did not come through an exclusively Jahvist tradition. Henceforward, the members of the divine clan are the servants of God: they are always astral powers, patrons of the nations, and the soldiery of heaven. It was imagined sometimes that Yahweh condemned them, imprisoned them, killed them, or at least reduced them violently to obedience when he was displeased with their behaviour. The theory of Daniel was more correct. In him, each kingdom has its heavenly chief; and the empires succeed one another as their patron becomes most powerful on high. Michael is the patron of the Jewish people: Gabriel, the angel of revelation. Gabriel fights with the angel of Persia, because that kingdom is condemned to perish; but, as he does not succeed in conquering, Michael goes to help him. The same thing happens when the angel of the Greeks has to be put down; and Gabriel had helped Michael when he had failed to end the Chaldæan empire. For the angels of the empires do not despoil one another

of the primacy: Michael and Gabriel depose them in succession when the hour fixed by the prophetic word has rung.

Legions of celestial spirits, as unnumbered as the stars, with which they are more or less identical, encompass the throne of God. Their function is to praise the creator without ceasing: to make up for the homage that paganism robs him of on earth. Angels are the messengers and interpreters of the divine revelations. Ezekiel still saw Yahweh himself, as Isaiah had seen him; but angels, the executors of the divine will, have come already into his visions. Zechariah saw only angels: and angels instructed Daniel. The angels thus watched over all things: over the guidance of man, as of the elements. God is now too great to make the rain and snow fall himself, or to speak to men. Inferior ministers see to all things, according to his orders.

Thus, on one hand, the primitive Gods and some of the primitive spirits, to which must be joined the cherubim and seraphim, who seem originally to have been personifications of storm clouds and lightnings, at least if they were not simply guardian *genii*, conceived in the shape of fantastic beasts, all came to be formed into a body of celestial powers, ruled by God; and very many of them were con-

fined to the ministry of punishment. On the other hand, on the borders of that region where the divine influences were exercised, in the lower world, the spirits of the earth were still active and unquiet: those which delighted in waste places, in ruins and in deserts; the spirits also of the maladies which afflict mankind. They, too, like the angels, formed a multitude without number, all ready to be enlisted in Satan's army.

§ 4

Moreover, it has been believed too easily that post-exilic Judaism is to be found wholly in the Law. Undoubtedly the Law moulded the domestic life of the Jews more and more, also their social arrangements, and their national life so far as they had one. Until the rising of the Maccabees, Judaism was a petty ecclesiastical and theocratic State under the suzerainty of Persia, and then of Macedonian conquerors. The entry of Pompey into Jerusalem (in 64 B.C.) marks the close of a short period of independence, which was not revived by the reign of Herod. But the Asmonæan monarchy existed only to secure the supremacy of the Law, since it was born of a revolt against Hellenism, which first encroached and then persecuted. It is in this direction that Jewish

life appears to us most visible and stable. But its inward forces were nourished by two sentiments, which are usually connected with one another, and which soften the dry and sterilizing influences of legalism: namely personal piety, and messianic hope. It is also proper to mention a certain striving of Jewish thought towards philosophy, by a meditation upon human destiny and the principles of right living.

The pious Israelite of post-exilian times is represented in the Psalms, of which only one portion seems to have been intended at first for liturgical use. The Psalms express the religion of the heart, the devotion of individuals; but individuals who have, so to speak, an ecclesiastical conscience, a lively sense of the community. The wholly personal note of these prayers, which is also at times very national and Jewish, should not surprise us. Piety, which is individual religion, derives its source necessarily from a reverent trust in the Infinite; but it is inclined to appropriate the God who is revealed to it, and to be dissatisfied if it does not believe itself in personal possession of the supreme good. Such is the sentiment shown in those Psalms which are filled with the living God. Perfect piety, however, while possessing God entirely for itself,

does not wish to exclude any one from the same advantage. Jewish piety was more filled with hope than with generosity; with only some rare exceptions, it remained more or less persuaded that the possession of God was a national and hereditary possession of its own

In reading the Psalms, one is forced to own that, for all pious Jews, it was good to live under the Law:

> The Law of Yahweh is an undefiled Law,
> Converting the soul;
> The testimony of Yahweh is sure,
> And giveth wisdom to the simple;
> The statutes of Yahweh are right,
> And rejoice the heart;
> The commandment of Yahweh is pure,
> And giveth light unto the eyes;
> The fear of Yahweh is clean,
> And endureth for ever;
> The judgements of Yahweh are true,
> And righteous altogether:
> More to be desired are they than gold,
> Yea than much fine gold;
> Sweeter also than honey,
> And the honey-comb:
> Moreover by them is Thy servant taught,
> And in keeping of them.
> There is great reward.*

Messianism was the answer to the problem, which troubled the sages, about the destiny

* Psa. xix. 7–11.

of man, and the justice of God. The Law compelled this question to be raised. It promised life to every one who followed its precepts; but what it contemplated above all was the national prosperity, the rewarding of the fidelity of all. The same principle of strict retribution did not fail to be applied to individuals; but, if it were already puzzling to discover the fulfilment in the course of history, it was far more disconcerting to prove the truth in individual cases. A belief in the resurrection of the dead only appeared late, and later still was any notion of the immortality of the soul. The prophetic religion banned any worship of the dead, and it would have thought it an outrage to God to declare men immortal.

> The dead praise not thee, Yahweh,
> Neither all they that go down into silence . . .*
> For Sheol † cannot praise thee,
> Death cannot celebrate thee:
> They that go down into the pit
> Cannot hope for thy truth.
> The living, the living, he shall praise thee. . . . ‡

Thus spake the psalmists, continually, in pious emulation. Ancient Israel had known

* Psa. cxv. 17. † The abode of the dead.
‡ Isa. xxxviii. 18–19.

the worship of the dead, and the practices usually connected with it among the non-civilized. The dead were assimilated more or less to the spirits, and they were dealt with accordingly. Even the calling up of the dead had been practised, though it was soon held to be unlawful. That kind of divination bordered on magic, and became easily suspected by religion. It is related that Saul had put away those who had the secret of it; but, on the eve of his death, before engaging in his last battle with the Philistines, being unable to get any oracle out of Yahweh, he went to Endor, to consult a witch, who, in spite of the royal prohibition, went on exercising her trade. The scene of the calling up, whether historical or no, does not cease to be instructive. "What seest thou?" said Saul to the woman.—"I see a God coming up out of the earth."—"What form is he of?"—"An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe." And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.* Thus the dead was an *elohim*, a supernatural being, a spirit of the grave, which did not hinder him from keeping the same dress as when he lived; and his first word was to complain of being troubled, like a man whose slumber is disturbed. Neither the priests

* 1 Sam. xxviii. 13-14.

nor the prophets of Yahweh could encourage these superstitions. But they had not ceased to be fashionable even in the time of Isaiah. Deuteronomy forbad them strictly, and it is said that Josiah suppressed them. The ancient practices in the worship of the dead were turned into the customs of mourning; and, of the popular beliefs about the dead, there remained only the notion of a shadowy survival, which was not complete annihilation, but was even less near to human life.

Job wished to die at his birth, because death was a perpetual sleep:

> Now I should have lien down and been quiet;
> I should have slept; then should I have been at rest:
> With kings and councillors of the earth,
> Who built themselves mausoleums;
> Or with princes that had gold,
> And filled their houses with silver. . . .
> There the wicked cease from troubling,
> And there the weary be at rest:
> There the prisoners are at ease together;
> They hear not the voice of the task-master.
> The small and the great are there
> And the slave is free from his master.*

This question of the grave was of no consequence to faith, because there was neither happiness nor suffering in the realm of the

* Job iii. 13–15, 17–19.

dead, neither punishment nor reward. Remuneration, therefore, had to be placed in this life.

By the progress of civilization and the movement of thought in the times of the Persian and Greek domination, and doubtless also by the growth of individual piety, it came to be asked how providential justice could be demonstrated by facts, or even adjusted with realities. Psalms and sapiential books testify that the grave scandal of that time was the misery of the just and the felicity of the wicked. Perhaps it is not superfluous to say that by the "just" here must be understood above all the observers of the Law; and by the "wicked," similarly, not only criminals of high and low degree, but men who were too free in thought and practice. The eyes were shut as much as possible to the evidence; and men repeated after the psalmists:

> "I have been young, and now am old,
> "Yet saw I never the righteous forsaken." *

They repeated that the prosperity of the wicked is fleeting; and passing, too, is the tribulation of the godly man: that the latter is blessed after his death, and in his posterity;

* Psa. xxvii. 25.

that the former is cursed in his tomb, and punished in his descendants. But all the righteous did not die old, and some of them perished in misfortune. Was, then, the sincerity of their goodness to be suspected, or the reality of their deserving?

The problem, as we know, is magnificently set forth in Job, where an old legend is used as a framework for the discussion. The friends of Job support the common thesis, that goodness is always recompensed: and Job urges the objections. Against those who wish to believe him guilty because he is unfortunate, Job does not rely on the witness of his own conscience: he appeals to a divine witness, which in the end is given him. But there is no solution. Yahweh, who intervenes to wind up the debate, only declares the mystery: his justice is as unfathomable as his creative wisdom and the effects of his power. It must be believed, though it cannot be proved. It is only asserted that a good man may be hurt without his innocence being suspected, and without being justified himself in arraigning God. Ordinary faith could only raise itself to this height with difficulty. We can see how the mass of believers, in a crisis like the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, came to accept the theory of a resurrection.

Formerly there were sages who, without speculating differently about the justice of God, professed to teach men the art of happiness. It was the art of right living. But the sages formerly did not understand it altogether as the doctors of the Law did, though, in Ecclesiasticus, sage and doctor coalesce. From the standpoint of the Law and of piety, sin is a fault against God: from the standpoint of wisdom it is a folly; piety thus becomes prudence, and duty interest. All wisdom, however, is a gift of God, and revelation itself is wisdom, since it teaches how to live properly. God having become absolutely transcendent, they finished—and was it only by some Hellenic influence? We may guess it, though it is less easy to prove—they finished by conceiving Wisdom as an intermediary between God and man: it was she who had created the world, and who taught men. Thus they went towards the conception of a supreme reason, the cause and standard of all intelligence. But philosophical speculation was bound to be arrested sooner or later, as soon as it was clearly understood, and the author of Ecclesiasticus so taught, that the highest and fullest manifestation of wisdom is contained in the Law. Ultimately, the optimism of the sages who wrote the Proverbs and

Ecclesiasticus was due to their being believers; their confidence in life proceeded from their faith in Yahweh as the protector of Israel: it was akin to the messianic hope.

Where that hope failed, wisdom became naturally pessimist and even sceptical. This is the case of Ecclesiastes: a spirit filled with curiosity about all subjects, but a man disillusioned about all things; steeped enough in Hellenism, as it would appear, to see or to guess the sterility of Jewish particularism, but not enough to have confidence in himself and in the worth of reason. The pretended Solomon confines himself to saying that all things are vanity, and exceeding vanity: that there is nothing new under the sun; that the same end waits the sage and the senseless; that man is bad, and woman worse; that over all is the supremacy of chance. There is no hope beyond the tomb: "a living dog is better than a dead lion." And the reason is that "the living know "that they will die, while the dead know "nothing. . . . Whatsoever thy hand findeth to "do, do it with thy might; because there is "neither activity, nor thought, nor knowledge, "nor wisdom in the *Sheol* whither thou goest." * For the rest, Koheleth does not deny the justice of God: he proclaims only that it is incompre-

* Eccl. ix. 4–5, 10.

hensible; therefore let us fear God, and enjoy life wisely. But feeling for religion wanes when the community is wanting. Koheleth is no longer a Jew, but he is not yet a citizen of the world. He has not the religion of humanity. All he stands for is a transcendental egoism. We learn from him how the Jewish faith could destroy itself. We must search elsewhere to know how it could preserve itself, and triumph.

MESSIANISM

CHAPTER VI

MESSIANISM

THE capture and the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in 586, made an end of the Jewish nationality. The brief time of independence and prosperity under the Asmonæan rulers was merely an interlude in the history of a development which was exclusively religious. As that new monarchy was a pontificate, it experienced internal difficulties almost as soon as it was organized; and we may question if it developed the normal conditions of a state that was made to last. What enabled Judah to survive was its religion; and its religion preserved it in the midst of a world where its political influence was henceforth insignificant. Religion alone sustained it, by means of its immovable faith in the God of Israel, and in the fortune which he designed for his chosen people. We have just seen how the trial of their faith consisted

actually in the contradiction between facts and theory, when the latter was faced impartially, and its principles were applied to individual lives. But, in spite of everything, hope in the triumph of a nation which had ceased to exist was maintained by means of the religion which became the only stay and tie for the remnants of the ancient people. The dream was a paradox, but it was not therefore sterilized, since Christianity issued from it. And now it is advisable that we should examine it.

§ 1

The messianic theory exists in germ in that feeling of confidence which is inspired by prayer; that feeling especially which a religous body, a tribe or a nation, cherishes with regard to its heavenly protector: the theory is identical, in its essence, with that trust in the divine protection which is at the root of all worship. The expectation of glorious destinies for Israel corresponded to the exalted notions which had been formed of Yahweh. It was not possible to imagine an exceedingly powerful God whose people would not be dowered with good fortune. But if the expectation of Israel had depended only on that conviction, it would have differed little from the trust which the Assyrians placed in their

God Ashur, or Nebuchadnezzar in his God Marduk, or the Romans in the Gods of the Capitol and in the *Genius* of the Eternal City.

Yahweh was not only a very great God, but a just God, who was not satisfied with the mere external dues of worship, but whose chief requirements were in the moral sphere. That is why, as soon as clear hopes were formed about the glorious destinies of Israel, the fulfilment of those hopes was made dependent on moral conditions, namely on the practice of righteousness ; or, rather, the proclamation of the triumph was subordinated to that of a chastisement. The latter, indeed, it would seem, must precede the former; and it was far more prominent in the message of the prophets until the fall of the Judæan monarchy. There will be a great judgment by Yahweh of his faithful people: when that people has been duly crushed, the righteous, the minority, who shall have survived the trial, will enjoy their God in peace, and will taste on earth an unmixed happiness, every trouble being expelled out of the world along with its wickedness.

This conception of Israel's future may be seen in the prophets of the eighth century. But it is plain that, in earlier times, the Israelites had counted more upon Yahweh's

help in battle, notwithstanding some defeats, and on his material benefits, in spite of natural visitations, than they dreamed of moral conditions being attached to his favours. The hope could not be purer than the religious conception. For long, no doubt, it was held that fat victims were the surest means of gaining the divine support. The messianic notion had its course of evolution, like the conception of God; and they grew concurrently.

The felicity of the righteous was the definite object of the messianic kingdom; but it was conceived primarily as the reign of God, and formerly as the overwhelming victory of Yahweh. And had not Yahweh always been the God of glorious battles? The prophets had never ceased to conceive him as a redoubtable warrior. It is he who breaks, when he wills, the pride of the conquerors whom they call Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, or Antiochus. In the threats which Isaiah flung at the King of Assyria, in those of the prophets who foretold the ruin of the Chaldæan power, in the account of the defeat which, according to Ezekiel, Gog the fabulous King of Magog is to suffer in Palestine, in the premonitions of Daniel about the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, Yahweh shows himself as the invincible enemy of every pagan king

As a God jealous of his glory, he is the enemy of the idolatrous powers; as God of Israel, he is the avenger of his people. He is always the same God, whom the song of Deborah presents rushing from Sinai, over the hills of Seir and the plains of Edom, to fight with Israel against Sisera. The point of view is enlarged; but the warm feeling of religious and patriotic confidence inspired both the ancient canticle and the latest prophecies. That is why the very phrasing of this sentiment is passed on with it from century to century, the image of Yahweh-Sabaoth, the God of victorious battles.

There is another victory which Yahweh accomplished at the beginning of the world, and which he follows up daily: that which is shown in the ordering of nature. It is notorious that the old legends of the creation did not shrink from portraying Yahweh bridling the monsters of chaos. That strife never ended; because the Hebrew stories of the creation, like the other primitive cosmogonies, were at bottom only a transference into the farthest past of experiences which were being repeated in the present. The passing of day into night, of spring into winter, the death of nature and its annual resurrection, were all divine works: it was by the power of beneficent deities, who

were stronger than the spirits of death and darkness, that light, order, and life were produced in the world. Creation was nothing else than this great work in its beginning, when the Gods made the first day issue out of darkness; when the shapes of heaven and earth were first moulded; when the vernal foliage sprang first out of the soil; when the fish took possession of the waters, the birds of the air, men and beasts of the solid earth: in spite of the opposition raised at the beginning by the monstrous deities of chaos, with an audacity that was all the greater because hitherto it had been invincible. Yahweh, too, had himself beaten Rahab and his allies: he held the sea enchained. When the great day of his glory shall come, he will complete his work in nature; and then nothing dark, harmful, or unpleasing will be left in it.

For these reasons, Isaiah describes ferocious beasts as changed suddenly into harmless beings, as no doubt it was imagined that they had been at first; the anonymous prophets of the captivity made the wilderness blossom solely in honour of the exiles' return; Ezekiel made the holy land into a paradise, where even the tree of life will grow and, what we do not find in our stories of Genesis, a well or stream of life; Daniel promises an even greater marvel, the

victory of Yahweh over death, and the resurrection of the just; the seer of the Apocalypse goes farther, and at the end of time has the sea itself destroyed, that last remnant of the chaotic ocean, the haunt of the beaten Dragon, which will serve him no longer as a refuge, since it will have vanished, and the Dragon himself will be cast into the fire.

The oppressor of Israel appeared as the representative of the pagan world in rebellion against Yahweh; he was, in the political and religious spheres of contemporary history, what Tiamut-Rahab were in the order of nature, and in legends of the cosmogony. He was naturally compared to them, and then identified with them. It was not arbitrarily, with the caprice of a symbolist poet, that Daniel figured the pagan empires under the shapes of animals. They were the successors, so to speak, of the monsters which the traditions of cosmogony had banished to the frontiers of creation, and which re-entered with them again into history so as to be crushed finally by the hand of the almighty God. While it was Satan himself who, for a still better reason, was identified with the old enemy, the idolatrous and persecuting empire was always the Beast, the monster who represented on earth the power of the Dragon, and who must share in his ruin as he had shared in his proud impiety.

The character of Satan grew in the course of centuries. He appeared first at the return from the captivity. Then he was only a member of the celestial society, who had his place among the sons of God, the beings who form the court of Yahweh. He exercised over men a sort of inspection, which was not tutelary, because at the divine tribunal he was the accuser of the guilty and the recommender of punishment. He impersonated in some way an aspect of the divinity which the character of Yahweh had ended by out-growing, namely a sort of jealous curiosity which spies out human weaknesses and arranges trials to show them up, rather than to give men the opportunity to surmount them. Such he appears in the Book of Job. And it may be said that his function as a rather ill-natured critic tended to change him into a declared enemy of those whom he accused: finally, he became the enemy of God himself, being opposed to all his merciful plans for his own people and for mankind. He was identified with the snake of Eden and the monster of chaos, so that he came to represent in the world and in history that evil power which is opposed to the reign of God. He became the head of the wicked spirits. All the elements of his personality are mythological, but they are taken from various

sources; and if, in the latter phase of his evolution, he resembles the Ahriman of Persian dualism, this does not imply that the Persian influence can explain him completely. That influence served rather to make him definite than to create him.

Amos, as we have said above, seems to have stopped short at the prospect of a judgment of Israel by Yahweh. It would have been a victory without results, and with all the appearances of a defeat. Hosea foresaw a reconciliation of Yahweh with his people, after their chastisement. Isaiah waited for the inauguration of a reign of justice, in which the small number of elect will be ruled by a king after God's heart. Jeremiah was chiefly the prophet of chastisement, but he did not believe in the final ruin of his people. While the dreadful siege, which was to end in the destruction of the Jewish state, had already begun he bought a field in his native town, and executed all the deeds of the contract, to show that Judah would revive, and that there would be a future for Yahweh's people. The prophet seems to have associated the remnant of Ephraim with the remnant of Judah. Yahweh will reunite his scattered children, under a prince of the house of David, who will make the right triumph. In these dreams of happi-

ness, the Gentiles have no share: the foreigners must be kept in awe, or destroyed by the God of Israel, or driven out by fear, or struck with wonder by the puissance of Yahweh. Of their conversion, properly speaking, there is no question.

When Jerusalem had fallen, and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy appeared either impossible or hardly desirable, the messianic notion was changed in form. Ezekiel gave only a very attenuated function to the prince of the future Israel: he gratified himself by imagining a religious society, living round the temple, consecrated as it were to its worship, happy in its separation from the world; a kingdom of liturgical felicity, whose coming Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Law itself, tried to bring about: the nations would not succeed in troubling it; the invasion of Gog, the King of Magog, symbolises the last attempt of oriental paganism against the kingdom of the saints; and this attack, which the author of the Johannine Apocalypse will reproduce later, is a kind of tragic interlude in the happiness of the elect, which nothing afterwards shall disturb.

In the Second Isaiah, the triumph of Yahweh is confused with the return from exile and the restoration of Jerusalem: God will guide his people through the wilderness; the nations will

partake in the happiness of Israel, but rather as clients and tributaries, than as people admitted to a full share of messianic prosperity Those parts of the book, however, which deal with the Servant of Yahweh present Israel as the missionary of God to the Gentiles, whose conversion is announced. The ideal and righteous Israel has atoned by suffering for the historical and sinful Israel. Yahweh will return again to Zion, and his faithful will come back with him. No uncircumcised shall tread the ground of the holy city. There shall be no more sorrows and tears. Jerusalem will be the paradise of God.

The Messianic king reappears in the second portion of Zechariah.

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
> Shout with joy, O daughter of Jerusalem!
> Behold, thy king cometh unto thee:
> He is just and conquering;
> Lowly, and seated upon an ass,
> Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass,
> He will cause to disappear the chariots of Ephraim,
> And the horses of Jerusalem;
> The bow of war shall be destroyed.
> His dominion shall be from sea to sea,
> And from the river to the ends of the earth.*

The failure of these gorgeous hopes was no

* Zech. ix. 9–10.

discouragement to faith. Israel, stirred up by its reformers, entered resolutely on the practice of the Law, convinced that the divine promises would accomplish themselves when the people had risen to the height of their providential vocation. Above all, in critical times, they consulted the ancient books, so as to draw from them consolation for the present and encouragement for the future. They believed that not a single word of those oracles would fail, and they waited with a feverish anxiety for the fulfilment which always lingered. The way in which Daniel interprets the seventy years, which Jeremiah had fixed as the duration of the captivity, shows how they applied ancient prophecies to new circumstances, by methods of symbolical interpretation : the seventy years of the captivity, which ought to end in the kingdom of God, are seventy weeks of years, which must elapse between the exile and the great event. The Book of Daniel was written in view of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, as the second part of Isaiah was with a foresight of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus. Nevertheless, they expected the salvation of God in the immediate future. The more imminent their peril became, the nearer they thought must be Yahweh's miraculous intervention. They imagined the time had come

when the Kingdom of God should replace the persecuting and idolatrous empires of the world.

It is easy to see in Daniel how the experience of the past has enlarged the horizon of the prophets. Instead of simply facing the present situation and announcing a near crisis, with a glorious restoration of the true Israel, the new prophet looks back, perhaps many centuries, and designs a setting into which Bossuet was not afraid of adjusting universal history. He sees four empires which followed, by absorbing, one another: and of which the last, more than any of its predecessors, gave a proof of its insolence to Yahweh and of cruelty to his people. Through their connexion, these four empires were but one; the empire of idolatry, the kingdom of evil and error which Yahweh allows the powers of darkness to set in motion against his people, to chastise and purify them. The empire of this world must succumb, giving place to the empire of God; and the righteous who have died will rise again to have their part in it.

§ 2

"At that time," said the angel Gabriel to the pseudo-Daniel, "shall Michael stand up, the "great prince which standeth for the children "of thy people; and there shall be a time of

"trouble, such as never was since there was a "nation even to that same time: and at that "time thy people shall be delivered, every one "that shall be found written in the book. And "many of them that sleep in the dust of the "earth shall wake, some to everlasting life, and "some to shame and everlasting contempt. "And they that be wise shall shine as the bright- "ness of the firmament; and they that turn "many to righteousness, as the stars for ever "and ever." * The last verses which have been added to the Book of Isaiah, and which must be of about the same period as Daniel, explain the fate of the damned, and make their sufferings an ingredient in the happiness which awaits the elect. "And it shall come to pass, that "from one new moon to another, and from "one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come "to worship before me, saith the Lord. And "they shall go forth, and shall look upon the "carcases of the men that have transgressed "against me; for their worm shall not "die, neither shall their fire be quenched; "and they shall be an abhorring unto all "flesh." † It is evident that the unlimited burning of these corpses is the punishment of the individuals of whom they were the bodies. The *inferno* of the damned exists alongside of

* Dan. xii. 1–3. † Isa. lxvi. 23–4.

Jerusalem the blessed, and the fire of Gehenna burns now in the same place where the pyres of Moloch used to flare. Thus eschatology acquired the ingredients which were yet wanting to it: resurrection and judgment, everlasting happiness of the good, everlasting torment of the wicked. These are the subjects which the greater number of the apocalypses will work out, though for a long time a certain vagueness adhered to these beliefs, and they were not added immediately to the general and ordinary faith of the Jews. Tobit, even Baruch, the Assumption of Moses, the First Book of Maccabees ignored the resurrection: the Second Book of Maccabees mentions it, but in the manner of an apologist who argues with objectors. In fact, not only the Samaritans, but the Sadducees, the Jewish priesthood, did not accept it.

This theory of the resurrection appears all at once in Daniel in a form which betrays its origin, one might even say its necessity. It is not yet all men who rise, but "many of the dead"; those who had held relations with the God of Israel, either by obeying or by opposing him, that is the righteous and their persecutors. Neither the resurrection nor the judgment is universal. Each is referred directly to the welfare of Israel, but is not applied

generally. It is a solution of the special crisis and problem which Judaism has to face in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. There are martyrs now, and they are dead; but who will venture to say that they will have no part in the Kingdom of God, which is so near? They should be among the first in it: therefore they will live again. There were also renegades, who denied the religion of their fathers, and who helped the enemy in persecuting their brethren; can it be that those of them who are dead, too, will by that death escape the punishment they deserve? The latter will come back also, to undergo the eternal shame that is their due. It is the spontaneous demand of faith. When judgment and resurrection come to be spoken about for all the human race, the notions will be attached to an end of the world, and a cosmic regeneration. Here a certain reflection is manifested, and the direct influence of some foreign teaching may be more easily admitted.

Even so far as it bears on the fate of Israel, the resurrection implies a complete evolution in the ancient beliefs about the dead, and in the very notion of God. Formerly the kingdom of the dead was a region into which the power of Yahweh had not extended; and the dead might be treated as spirits, they

were beyond religion. But now, no limits were set to the divine power: if one rose to heaven, God is there; if one sunk under the earth, he is there also. Thus there was no reason why his justice should not be exercised beyond death. And the conscience of the pious revolted against admitting that death could separate him finally from his God. The cares of personal salvation, and the principle of a retribution according to merit, both led straight to a notion of justice and of an extended life beyond the tomb. That justice meant the judgment of God, and that life meant the resurrection; because they had not reached the Greek notion of a spiritual and immortal soul. That which survived in death was not an imperishable soul, it was the shade of the individual; in order that the individual should live, in spite of death, he had to rise again. Thus Enoch, Moses, and Elijah were imagined always living. By the power of Yahweh, their lot might become that of all the righteous.

This belief imposed itself by what may be described as its actuality. It was united closely to the belief in a great judgment, to the fevered expectation of God's kingdom, which they desired to think of as imminent. The more unhappy they were, the nearer they believed

themselves to the end; to that divine intervention which would turn the anguish of the righteous into final happiness, and into everlasting punishment the exalting insolence of the wicked. The imagination revelled in the providential circumstances of that happy event, which was decreed in heaven, of which the prophetic indications were searched out from the sacred books. Elijah, for instance, who had been taken to heaven, must return; even before Daniel, there were speculations about it. The last verses of Malachi, which seem to have been added later, though the author of Ecclesiasticus knew them, attributed to him a ministry of reconciliation before "the great and terrible day of Yahweh." * Ecclesiasticus adds that he will "restore the tribes of Jacob."† Elsewhere it is an angel who inaugurates the reign of God: in Daniel, it is Michael, the angel of the chosen people. These interventions replaced that of the messiah-king; but the apocalyptic tradition found a way of amalgamating the two notions.

One of the Psalms of Solomon, so-called, expresses itself thus about the messianic king:—

Be careful, O Lord, to raise up their king, the son of David,

* Mal. iv. 23–24.

† Ecclus. xlviii. 10.

At the time appointed by thee, so that he may rule
Israel thy servant.
Gird him with power, to crush the unrighteous tyrants,
To clear Jerusalem of the heathen who oppress it
miserably.
In wisdom and justice may he lay waste the country
of the sinners;
May he break the pride of sinners like the potter's
vessel;
With a rod of iron he shall destroy their being,
And with the breath of his mouth will he utterly
destroy the heathen.
May the nations at his threatening flee before him,
And may he punish the sinners for the imaginations
of their heart.
Then will he gather an holy people, and rule over
them in righteousness.
And he will judge the tribes of the people who are
sanctified by the Lord, his God.
He will not suffer unrighteousness to remain amongst
them,
And no man given to wickedness shall dwell among
them;
For he shall know them all as the sons of God.
He shall divide them the land according to their tribes,
Neither settler nor stranger shall dwell among them.
He shall judge peoples and nations with equity and
wisdom.
So long as they serve him, he will hold the Gentiles in
his yoke
And he will extol the Lord openly before the whole earth.
He will cause Jerusalem to be pure and holy, as at
the beginning,
So that the Gentiles shall come from the ends of the
earth to behold her glory,

And their enfeebled children shall bring presents;
And they shall see the glory which the Lord, his God, hath fulfilled in him.
And he shall be the righteous king over them, taught by God;
No iniquity shall be among them in his time;
For they shall all be holy, and their king shall be the anointed of the Lord.
He shall not trust in horses, in horsemen and bows;
He shall not heap up gold and silver for his warfare,
Neither will he put his trust in numbers in the day of battle. . . .
He shall himself be free from sin, to rule a mighty people,
To chastise their leaders, and to destroy sinners by the power of his word.
While he liveth he shall not be feeble in the service of his God,
For God will strengthen him with his holy spirit,
And make him wise in counsel with strength and righteousness.
The blessing of the Lord shall make him of a good courage,
And he shall not fail.*

This is a modest ideal and sparing in the miraculous, it is due rather to the prophetic literature than to Daniel and the apocalypses. The Messiah is the king and type of righteousness, but he is not raised above humanity. He is a personage less supernatural and transcendent than Elijah or Michael. He is given differently

* Psa. of Solomon xvii. 21–33, 36–38.

in that part of the Book of Enoch which is called *The Parables*, and which seems to have been written about the end of the reign of Alexander Jannæus (104–78). There the Messiah bears the names of The Elect and Son of Man, after the passage in Daniel where the Man symbolises the reign of the saints,* which is to succeed the pagan empires, typified by the beasts. But the Messiah is not really one of the human family: he is "The heavenly man" of Saint Paul, created by God from all eternity, but kept in heaven till his manifestation in the last time. "Before the sun was made, or the "signs of the Zodiac, and the stars of heaven, "his name was uttered before the Lord of "spirits. . . . All the inhabitants of the earth "shall bow down before him. . . . It is for this "that he hath been chosen and hidden before "the Lord from before the creation of the "world."† In the day of the resurrection The Elect will gather the just and the saints. He was only conceived as pre-existing in relation to his eschatological functions; and he did not intervene, like John's *Logos*, in the creation of the world and the history of mankind.

The hopes of the Jews were thus clothed in forms that were various enough, and, judged only by the literature, it might be thought that

* Dan. vii. 13. † Enoch xlviii. 3, 6.

the person of the Messiah did not count for much. But it appears certain that the people were more occupied than the books with the expected liberator, and that for him the national independence was a matter of the first importance. The pious and righteous prince of the Psalms of Solomon was acceptable to the devout, and the heavenly man of Enoch to the theologians; but the first-comer who spoke about the liberty of Israel was the favourite of the populace. The historian Josephus records many instances of adventurers who thus gained credit. Judas the Galilean, who stirred up a revolt over the enrolment of Quirinius, declared that it was shameful and heinous to pay taxes to the Romans, considering that the Jews should have no master but God. Those were the principles which roused uneducated believers. During the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, they never tired of waiting for a manifestation from heaven, to save the city and the temple. In the time of Hadrian, Barcochba got himself recognised as Messiah, and he was greeted in that capacity by Akiba, one of the most learned rabbis of his age. The ideal of Jesus was only popular through the simplicity of its conceptions: it was not so at all through the purity of its moral characteristics, nor by the depth of its religious sentiment, which relied

upon God alone for the avenging act by which the natural freedom of the kingdom of the just would be established.

Speaking generally, it may be said that all those who talked in those days about the kingdom of God and its coming, about the Messiah and his reign, were sure to find some believers. No one was exacting about proofs and evidence: only the conclusion mattered. If, by an impossibility, any one had come forward to expose the spurious Daniel, by showing that he was an ignoramus in his history of the kings of Babylon; that he was mistaken when he introduced an empire of the Medes between the Chaldæan and Persian empires; that he did not know even the duration of the latter, the censor would have merely wasted his time over this learning and criticism. The dark language of the apocalypses always lends itself to the subtilties of exegesis and the subterfuges of apologists. A people that is greedy in hopes does not trouble about the foundation for the promises made to it. At the time of Antiochus, messianic hope did not lead to a kingdom of God, but to a temporary restoration of the Jewish nationality. Undeniably it harboured a great deal of illusion; and if it could inspire much heroism, it could also lead by blind fanaticism to the gravest disasters.

The popular imagination was assuredly more stirred by the material forms in which the announcement of God's kingdom was expressed than with the spiritual and moral basis which underlay the apocalyptic visions, as formerly the message of the prophets. They pondered more upon the revolution that God was thought to be preparing than upon the conditions of righteousness which were necessary for sharing in the kingdom of the saints. The messianic hope roused the Jews against the Roman domination, and the results were other than in Maccabæan days. The inward quality of this hope, a faith solely religious and moral, an aspiration for goodness through truth and justice, were mingled with hopes of a brilliant fortune in this world, of Israel's material victory over the Gentiles, of the vengeance of the national God on those who had oppressed his people. The Gospel of Jesus made the spiritual element prevail over the material; but it was only the crucified Messiah who caused the notion of an earthly, national, and political triumph to disappear among his followers. Christianity issued, so to speak, from the ambiguity to which Jesus owed his death. And one may assert, too, that messianism killed the people which aimed at its literal fulfilment.

§ 3

Judaism, however, was very widely disseminated through the pagan world long before the appearance of Christianity: it had carried on an active propaganda, and not unsuccessfully; but it remained the religion of the Jews while Christianity, which was by its origin a Jewish sect, became an universal religion through breaking with Judaism.

It is certain that the community in Babylon was, after the captivity, a very zealous promoter of Judaism; it was even, along with Jerusalem, its head-quarters, and it can hardly be considered a foreign settlement. Otherwise, the Jewish propaganda did not really begin until the time of the Greek domination. The Egyptian colony only became really important under the Ptolemies. It was the Maccabæan movement which gave a new impulse to Judaism. This, having won for a time its political independence in Palestine, extended its influence by war. The Jews, moreover, spread themselves everywhere, as the writers of classical antiquity bear witness. They point out, too, their credit and influence, and the activity of their proselytizing. This diffusion of the Jews, and their influence throughout the pagan world, are attested indirectly but most significantly by the

story of the apostle Paul. It may be said that wherever that missionary of the Gospel carried the faith of Christ he found organized synagogues, which had not only their Jewish following, but also other adherents, recruited from paganism, and composed especially of those "who feared God"; that is of persons who, without entering the Jewish community through circumcision, accepted monotheism, attended the services of the synagogue, and observed certain rules of the Law. It was in this half-Jewish world that the Christian preaching won its earliest recruits.

The older Judaism had favoured to some extent a propaganda among the Gentiles. We have seen what were the hopes of the Second Isaiah. The same notions are also found in the closing chapters of the book (lvi.–lxvi.), which are from a later writer, and in certain psalms. The prophet, who is known by the name of Malachi, in his criticism of contemporary Judaism, goes so far as to set pagans on the same footing as Jewish believers, and to say that the Gentiles pay God a homage that is equally acceptable to him, if not even more so, than the sacrifices of the temple. The Book of Jonah has something of the same kind. The Wisdom literature had at first a tendency to conceive of religion as a moral belief, more

or less disengaged from the Law. The persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes stirred up a revival of the Jewish spirit; and, in Palestine at least, there was a strong reaction against the spread of pagan thought and manners; but proselytism of the Gentiles did not cease to be carried on. In the method of treating them, two tendencies were soon developed among the doctors of the Law: one, more liberal, facilitating intercourse with non-Jews, and helpful to proselytizing; this was the way of Hillel and his school: the other was narrower, and scrupulous in all intercourse with pagans, and really opposed to any propaganda; this was represented by Shammai and his disciples. It was the latter method which prevailed finally at the time of the revolt against Rome. The Books of Esther and Judith show that mistrust of the heathen could easily pass into hatred.

Judaism had, to favour it, the fascination that all the eastern religions then exercised over the Roman world, which could no longer satisfy its religious aspirations by its traditional worships: and it had an advantage over the other eastern religions in its loftier teaching, its genuine morality, its tougher and more extended organization. All the synagogues of the dispersion, not only within the empire but beyond it, used the same sacred books; they

all, even those which were most accessible to pagans, were zealous for the Law; they were all in touch with Jerusalem by their regular contributions and pilgrimages. And a strong feeling of brotherhood, instead of hierarchical fetters, united all these scattered communities into a religious society filled with vitality and strength.

But Judaism had against it certain practices, several of which were annoying and eccentric: circumcision especially was a practice which the heathen considered ridiculous. The Law had moulded Judaism in such a way that without being either a nation or a church, strictly speaking, it was a kind of national church into which people could not be admitted without becoming Jewish: to belong to it was, so to speak, for a man to proclaim himself in his own country a member of an alien society. It was not thus with the other and less exclusive oriental worships, which might be adopted without breaking from paganism. That rupture, which Judaism enforced sharply by its external modes of living, was based also upon the demands of monotheism. And monotheism thus interpreted was precisely what the heathen understood least. What the most enlightened pagans said about the God of the Jews, and about their offensive disdain for all

other Gods, shows they were not yet ripe for comprehending an absolute monotheism. In fact, it was partly through tempering monotheism by the *gnosis* of trinitarian doctrines, and partly through identifying Jesus with the deity, that Christianity was enabled to lead the pagan world to accept the doctrine of a sole God.

It would seem, besides, that hostility against the Jews grew in proportion to their diffusion, their influence, and the success of their propaganda. A kind of anti-semitism existed in Græco-Roman antiquity, caused by contempt for a sect which in spite of everything was exclusive, and was suspected for that reason, which was exacting and peculiar in its customs. And much dislike was roused by the pride of the Jews, which was haughty not only to the religions but to the civilization of paganism.

And the Jews, there is no doubt, imagined themselves the depositaries of a higher wisdom, which came to them from God, by a special privilege. The author of Ecclesiasticus shows Wisdom seeking for a settled habitation; and, by the Creator's order, she set up her tent in Jacob, and her dwelling-place on Zion.* The human race thus found itself in a position of signal inferiority when confronted with the

* Ecclus. xxiv. 7–11.

Jews: God had abandoned the Gentiles to ignorance and error, while it pleased him to instruct Israel. Placed before the pagan civilization, the Jews seemed inclined for a time to appropriate it, but only by affecting to rediscover in it their own property. Never was there seen such a torrent of apocryphal and spurious literature as was produced by the Hellenistic Judaism: as much to heighten its importance with the pagans, to silence their objections, to humiliate them in that which they considered their most valuable possession, namely science and philosophy, as to extend among them a propaganda of Israelitish monotheism. Marvellous legends concerning the origins of the Greek translation of the scriptures, the Septuagint, forged quotations from classical authors, deceptive fables about the heroes in the Bible, fictions of every kind for the greater glory of Israel and its religion: nothing was overlooked which could serve to exalt the Jews above the pagans. All the ancient civilizations had been schooled by Israel and its ancestors: all the philosophers of Greece and Rome owed to the Law whatever they knew about truth. The Jews really believed that they were the light of the world; but they understood the question rather differently from the old prophets. If, then, the choicest

spirits of antiquity were unable to appreciate the religious value of Judaism, it was partly, perhaps, because the way in which it was presented was not likely to give them a high notion of it. The Jewish literature inspired them with little esteem or trust; and so they did not try to solve the riddle which the Jewish religion presented to them: the striking contradiction between its national worship, and its universal God. The petty aspects of the system were far more visible.

The reign of Herod was the most prosperous time of Judaism under the Roman domination. Herod, understanding the people whom he had to govern, ordered his administration so as never to wound their religious prejudices; a policy of which the imperial government showed itself incapable when it ruled directly. By his political shrewdness he was able to acquire a sort of protectorate over all the Jews who were scattered through the Roman world; this both strengthened their position in the empire, and was most favourable to their propaganda. He guaranteed the safety of the Jews abroad while he repressed their fanaticism at home. After him, that fanaticism broke loose. The first act of the Roman authority, when Archelaus the tetrarch of Judæa was deposed, was a census for levying taxes, which

immediately stirred up a rebellion: it was intolerable to the people of God to feel themselves subjected so completely to a foreign rule. This was a prelude to the troubles which under Nero and Hadrian, brought about the ruin of Jerusalem, and separated Judaism from the land in which it had waited so long and vainly for the kingdom of Yahweh. As far as religious history is concerned, it is sufficient to add that the enmity against Rome was always growing, and that hatred of the pagans destroyed proselytism. After the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, monotheistic propaganda became the work of Christianity, which was now separated from Judaism and rejected by it. Judaism thenceforward was barred against all external influence: it regarded all profane culture with horror, and absorbed itself in a microscopic study and a scrupulous observance of its Law.

§ 4

And, what is more extraordinary, messianism also fell, as though exhausted or played out, in the last convulsions of Jewish nationalism, under Hadrian. The subject of the Messiah was no more than a thesis for rabbinical discussions, like any other point of Biblical doctrine; but the messianic fever, which had

had its final crisis in the rising of Barcochba, and its last visions in the apocalypses of the pseudo Ezra and Baruch, was for ever quieted. The Messiah will come, no doubt, but no one expects him. The Law alone reigns over the souls broken by their dreadful experiences, and dominates a religious society ever more strictly bound, which finds peace in its isolation. Events had deprived their hopes of all earthly foundations, by destroying the temple and giving over Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Until it may please God to bring forth his kingdom, which no one dreams now of advancing by any human agency, Judaism shall be a national church, scattered through the world; while Christianity, which issued from it, becomes an universal church.

About the time of the Christian era, messianism, as it had been moulded by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabæan rising, by the Roman conquest and the troubles which ensued on the death of Herod, could number among the Jews, especially in Palestine, almost as many adherents as there were practical believers; but all these believers had not the same ideals, and all the Palestinian Jews had not the same reality of faith.

We know that, in the actual times when

Jesus of Nazareth appeared, various tendencies prevailed among the Jews, and a sort of compromise was reached which kept the people more or less in a complete and voluntary submission to the Romans. The party which we may describe as messianic, and which had reconquered the national independence by arms in the days of the Maccabees, lived on chiefly among those who were called *Pharisees*, that is the devout and zealous, the "separated" from the profane world; who clung to a rigorous observance of the Law, and who saw in that a pledge of deliverance for Israel. Full of hatred and contempt for paganism, they bore the yoke of the foreigner impatiently, while waiting for God to liberate his people. Many of them, especially among the doctors of the Law, who were the most enlightened part of the Pharisean sect, drew sufficient inward joy from the study and practice of the commandments, and they had no wish at all to precipitate God's hour, nor to encourage any movements of revolt, which the most ordinary prudence would have disapproved. The populace was urged on without thinking, by the ardour of its faith, and by an immoderate desire for a victory by God, which would have won the national independence from the conquered Gentiles. The notion of a resurrection of the

just having penetrated since Daniel into the popular beliefs, they flattered themselves that God would soon crush the foreign oppressor, send his Messiah, and establish again the throne of David; and that the righteous dead would rise and take their place among the elect in the new kingdom.

Nevertheless the Pharisees, whether moderates or zealots, were not officially the religious heads of the people. The Sadducean priests, the real or imaginary descendants of Zadok, did not share their inflated and risky hopes. In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, several members of the higher priesthood were favourable to Hellenism; and, in the times which followed, the priests of Jerusalem, who were rich and well endowed, seemed always more anxious to maintain their existing security than to toil for the coming reign of the saints. The present, in fact, was too profitable for them not to mistrust a future brought in by revolution. Under the various powers which had followed one another, the position of the priests had always been better than that of the people. The state of things by which they profited, and about which they had little to complain, was good for them to preserve. If the national independence could have been gained without running

too many risks, they would have preferred independence to subjection; when fanaticism broke bounds, at the end of Nero's reign, they followed the movement in spite of themselves, trying always to restrain it, after having done their utmost to hinder it. As the Law was Israel's single rule of life, and was also the source of their own revenues, they made a profession of respecting the Law, and of not looking beyond it for truths and hopes: they thus came to oppose the theory of a resurrection, which was the corner-stone of current messianism; and, with the resurrection, the waiting for a kingdom of God. Politicians invested with a sacred character, the Sadducees had ceased to be a religious influence. Their only power came from their social position; and they strove, for very human motives, to cool the religious and national sentiment which was inflamed by messianic expectations. They were implacable enemies to the personification of these hopes, when it presented itself before them, simple and unarmed, in the features of Jesus.

Such were the two great parties before whom Christ found himself, and they both rejected him. They were not two separate sects within Judaism: rather, they were two

tempers which divided it, without causing an external schism; two groups, each unable to establish itself without the other. Two bodies which, though mutually hostile, clung to a common worship, for reasons in which religion was concerned; and which were even capable of joint action for a common purpose. In this more or less heterogeneous amalgam, the Pharisees represented the living Judaism, with its traditional faith, and also its narrow spirit; a legacy of the nationalism, of the ritualism, and of all that past which they wished to impose on the future. The Sadducees represented the political power of the hierarchy.

The Essenes, whom it would be erroneous to put on a level with Pharisees and Sadducees, were organized as a sect: it was a kind of ascetic Judaism, set up outside the Law, and under influences which are little known to us. They lived in community, had no personal property, and their ways were comparable to those of a religious order. They had no part in the worship of the temple; but they had their own rites, multifarious baths and ablutions, which had a sacramental character. Their common meal was like another sacrament, by its meaning and its solemnity: they honoured the Pentateuch, but they also had

secret books. They kept the sabbath. Marriage was repudiated by them; but Josephus says that some of them allowed it under certain conditions. They condemned oaths, except that oath which they took upon entering the order, after a preparatory noviciate. The existence of such a sect, whose origin was prior to the close of the second century before Christ, shows at least that strange developments could be produced in Judaism, notwithstanding the tyranny of tradition. The Essenes do not seem to have been condemned, but rather esteemed, by orthodox Judaism. On the other hand, they do not seem to have had any profound effect upon it: nor does Christianity seem, at any rate in the beginning, to have had any connexion with the Essenes.

Thus the work of Moses and the prophets had reached the stage of maturity, if it had not passed it: all progress became impossible under the yoke of the Law; and religion tended to lose itself, on one hand in extravagance, on the other in worldliness. To continue growing, it had to burst its traditional covering, as the germ that wishes to expand must split the seed which contains it. It was through Christianity that the religion of Israel conquered the Roman world. But, independently of that success,

which was not altogether its own, its particular history is extraordinary enough; and the moral renovation of the ancients' Jahvism by the prophets is one of the most fruitful incidents for the historian of religions. Perhaps there is not another which shows more clearly that the phenomenon of religion cannot be reduced to another form of human activity, nor explained solely by causes pertaining to the social order; but that it expresses, in its purest manifestations, an endeavour to attain, beyond what is real and tangible, an ideal or a transcendent reality, conceived as the principle and goal of a moral life.

It is almost useless to ask whether Judaism by itself could have accomplished the work of Christianity. What Judaism could do of itself, it did. A religious society so strongly constituted was not really free to transform itself into another society, with the same expression of belief and the same moral principles, but without the same obsolete practices and the same exclusive spirit. We cannot imagine the authorities of Judaism, its priests and doctors, deciding to sacrifice the letter of the Law, to suppress the traditional observances, to transform themselves into an universal church, which would accept pagans without branding them by the Jewish circumcision.

Such a metamorphosis would have been a suicide of the old religion. A society cannot either wish or effect a suicide of that kind, even if it be the indispensable and certain condition of a renewed life. The individuals could not all see, either at the same time or clearly enough, the need for such a transformation; the mass of believers would never understand the necessity; those who led them would neither dare nor wish to discuss it. Nothing could make a form of religion, which still satisfied the majority of its adherents, although running a proximate risk of losing them, suddenly become something different from what it actually was.

Christianity owed its success to its separation from Judaism, which treated it as a heresy. If, by an impossibility, all the Jews had accepted Jesus for their Messiah when he went up to preach in Jerusalem, the war of extermination which ended in the catastrophe of A.D. 70 would have broken out thirty years earlier; and there would have been no Christianity. Jesus could not have been then accepted; because the circumstances and conditions of his appearance did not endorse his message, which was the announcement of God's kingdom: he did not wish to lead the people into a revolt against Rome; and he was not able to make the priests and scribes

recognise a mission which was guaranteed by nothing, except the assertion of him who declared himself invested with it. But, when that mission had become through his death an object of belief to his firm disciples, and the object of a faith repudiated by Judaism, the notion of a monotheism that was not Jewish was able to emerge and consolidate. Many pagans who feared God, but who could not make themselves complete Jews, came to the first preachers of a risen Jesus. An ardent genius was found to disclose the future way, when the question was raised whether the legal observances were necessary for the salvation of the converted. Without their perceiving it, Judaism had already been left. Paul understood that the new believers need not be made to enter it; and, without wishing it himself, he effected the rupture. Judaism remained with its Law, which preserved it while keeping it from spreading; and Christianity, released from the Law, went forward towards those destinies which befitted a young religion able to adapt itself to the mentality and the religious temperament of those whom it wished to gain.

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